

Women on the Siberian Frontier: The Expansion of Orthodoxy and Empire in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century

By
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**Women on the Siberian Frontier: The Expansion of Orthodoxy
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Abstract:

Combining the use of gender and women's history to understand female experience and identity formation with the history of the Russian imperial expansion, my dissertation will examine the presence of Orthodox women and on the Siberian frontier in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The relationship between gender and empire existed within a project of ecclesiastic imperialism, in which the Russian Orthodox Church sought to acquire large amounts of land and implant its faith in Siberia. I begin with the premise that both gender and empire are about relationships of power and the politics of difference. Women as Orthodox Christians transmitted the historical identity of the Russian state as empowered actors in the frontier spaces of Siberia, even while they were socially subordinate to the plans and desires of men. Orthodox women's stories in Siberia intersected with the establishment of ecclesiastical institutions and the propagation of Orthodox belief on the frontier, revealing that the Russian Orthodox Church was not only the moral legitimizer of empire, but the driving force of imperial expansion in this region. The interplay of power on the frontier in the realms of gender and empire occurred on an intimate, personal level, and was mediated in complex and unexpected ways. At times, gender structures reflected imperial models that promoted unequal power. At other times, conventional gender roles of women deviated, and created contradictions to the narrative of singularly powerful males as the dominant productive force in the construction and maintenance of a frontier community. This study of Orthodox women, their storied lives and experiences as monastic women, wives and widows, as well as prisoners and penitents, offers a multi-dimensional view of the Siberian frontier that has not been told.

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PREFACE

Growing up in the West and fascinated with the lives of pioneers that continued to settle West of the Mississippi River in the nineteenth century, I decided to explore the lives of women who moved east to the Siberian frontier nearly two centuries earlier. Although the first successfully English settlement at Jamestown in 1607 fits better chronologically with the Russian expansion into Siberia in the 1580s, Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis of the American West appeared more applicable.¹ The notable nineteenth-century Russian historian V. O. Kliuchevskii wrote in 1904 that colonization of the country was a profound event that determined the course of Russian history, and that "the history of Russia is a history of a country that colonized itself."² Then could not similarities in American expansion westward after breaking free from English rule be analogous to its Russian counterpart? Or was Kliuchevskii simply applying Turner's social process driven thesis to his interpretation of Russian history? Seeking to answer questions of competing conceptions of the frontier amongst two rival world powers led me to seek how Russian and America viewed their culture and history. Were causal dynamics focused on processes or on the agency of individual deeds and achievements the explanation surrounding the phenomena of frontier expansion? In considering whether the frontiers were fueled by social forces or were influenced by groups of people, I noticed the absence of women in both narratives. In 1993, Glenda Riley addressed the lack of historical knowledge concerning women in the American West that Turner's thesis propagated a century earlier at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.³ Turner proposed the indelible role of the Anglo

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *American Historical Association Annual Report for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C. 1894), 201.

² V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Kurs russkoi istorii*, Lecture 2, (St. Petersburg, 1904), 20-21.

³ Glenda Riley, "Frederick Jackson Turner Overlooked the Ladies," *Journal of the Early Republic* 13.2 (1993): 216-30.

male pioneer who participated in a series of processes in the making of American character that had little room for individual actors. In this vacuum of scholarship, popular literature depicted women as objects - either inferior, weak and in need of protection or as bold heroines transformed by the frontier rather than subjects who participated in the development of the West. As I explored a similar question surrounding historical knowledge of women in Siberian expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I found that after nearly four centuries the dynamic role of women as individuals or as a social influence has remained largely unconsidered.

Merely adding the female portion of society to the cast of characters on the frontier would be deficient, and much too brief. So, in deciding to investigate the presence of women on the Siberian frontier, I knew that I had to go to Siberia to experience its vast spaces, see the ethnic mix of people that populated Siberian towns and cities, and explore the archival records that might reveal the stories of women not previously told.

In my year living in Siberia, mostly traveling by train and bus to conduct research, I gained friends, insights, and the special joy of sharing Siberia with my daughter who not only generously offered me her company in a gap year after graduating high school, but also nursed me back to health after emergency knee surgery in Moscow -- something neither one of us signed up for when we set off for Siberia in September 2015. She photographed archival documents, ice skated with me in the open rink surrounding the Tobol'sk Sofia Cathedral, danced with me to Jo Lo's "On the Floor" at the extravagantly sublime New Year's Eve party thrown by the director and staff of the Tobol'sk State Museum and Nature Preserve, and played endless games of "gin rummy" as we travelled third class or 'Platskart' by train to destinations

that included Helsinki, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Tobol'sk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, and Ulan Ude. My gratitude to this formidable young woman cannot be fully expressed here, but her support was instrumental throughout my research, writing and completion of my dissertation.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Professor Eve Levin, and the members of my committee who unselfishly offered me their time, insights, and inspired me to ask difficult, but foundational questions about imperial spaces, the complexity of religious belief, and the recovery of female agency in a male-centered narrative of expansion and conquest. I have discussed my ideas formally at academic conferences, and informally with friends and colleagues, and I am grateful for their encouragement, recommended readings, and ideas that stimulated and helped to refine my arguments.

The financial support of the Department of History and the Humanities Program at the University of Kansas allowed me to learn, teach, and travel to conferences, while keeping me intellectually stimulated for the past seven years. In particular I am grateful to the administrative staff that had welcoming smiles, and time for a chat despite desks full of work. I was fortunate to receive fellowships to support language learning and research at home and abroad. I would like to thank the Hilandar Research Library at Ohio State for funding my time at the Medieval Slavic Studies Institute in 2013, the Center for Russian, East Europe and Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas for my Foreign Language Area Studies fellowship to Moscow in 2014, and the Fulbright US Student Program that funded an academic year of research in Siberia from 2015-2016 at Novosibirsk State University.

There are inevitably many more acknowledgements I owe to friends, family, colleagues, institutions, and organizations for the work I have been able to accomplish, but any and all deficiencies remain my own.

INTRODUCTION

Central features of formal, direct imperial rule were dynamic and ever changing. The construction and maintenance of empire on the Siberian frontier was not based entirely on governing strategies and political ideas, but equally on its subjects' reception and propagation of imperial forms of rule. Yet, both the scholarly and the popular images of the Russian Empire have focused on male actors, while uncritically and absent-mindedly excluding female subjects that relocated to the frontier. Centuries of androcentric accounts of Siberian expansion relegated women to the margins, if mentioning them at all. But surely the development of empire, and particularly its frontier environments, included the performance of gendered roles. The weighty histories of gender and empire are profound, along with the multifaceted conceptual frameworks for analyzing imperial spaces. Yet, when deliberately focusing on women in a frontier environment the cross-section of two multifaceted conceptual frameworks—those of empire and those of gender—yields the opportunity for enriched understanding of both.

I seek to place women in the foreground of imperial expansion, rather than the background, and to tell the stories of women to understand life in frontier spaces within the Russian empire in Siberia. Thus, within the large framework of gender and empire, I will tell the stories of primarily Orthodox women on the Siberian frontier in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I have made a conscious choice to focus on the lives of women, but not to minimize the role of men. To singularly prefer women without taking into account the presence and influence of men would be tantamount to repeating errors of biased historical accounts that have excluded female actors in the dynamic building of empire. The contrasting circumstances of frontier life reveal that women were targets and victims of imperial policies, and also agents of

empire. In acknowledging the influence of women on the frontier we must also recognize their complicity in the transformation of the frontier based on Russian cultural, religious, political, and economic models.

Frontier spaces in Siberia were unsettled and unsettling for both women and men. The “iron belt” (Ural Mountains) served as a geographic demarcation line between European Russia and lands beyond the Urals yet the frontier was ceaselessly moving. Moderately small groups of newcomers remained at hasty fortifications to establish nascent towns along Siberian waterways, while others moved on due to exigent circumstances determined by interactions with indigenous Siberians, their own abilities to eke out an existence, as well as prerogatives of local leaders and church hierarchs. Both the church and the state sought to enlist peasant labor as a method to claim lands in the name of the tsar, but they could do little to control the movement of settlers who sought elusive economic and physical security on the Siberian frontier.

The previous patterns of frontier settlement in the Russian north in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were reproduced on the seventeenth century Siberian frontier. As land routes carried peasants, merchants, traders, and privateers migrating through mixed indigenous and Russian spaces of the north, the lifestyles and patterns of cultural interaction provided a preview of the social order they anticipated or sought to flee from in Siberian lands.

Combining the use of gender and women’s history to understand female experience and identity formation with the history of the Russian imperial expansion, my dissertation will examine the presence of Orthodox women and on the Siberian frontier in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The relationship between gender and empire existed within a project of ecclesiastic imperialism, in which the Russian Orthodox Church sought to acquire large amounts of land and implant its faith in Siberia. I begin with the premise that both gender and empire are

about relationships of power and the politics of difference. Women as Orthodox Christians transmitted the historical identity of the Russian state as empowered actors in the frontier spaces of Siberia, even while they were socially subordinate to the plans and desires of men. Orthodox women's stories in Siberia intersected with the establishment of ecclesiastical institutions and the propagation of Orthodox belief on the frontier, revealing that the Russian Orthodox Church was not only the moral legitimizer of empire, but the driving force of imperial expansion in this region. The study of monastic institutions exposes how individual women functioned as agents of empire, yet not all women in convents, towns and villages were empowered with roles of authority, some were targets or victims of imperial policies.

Previous studies have focused on differences among multiethnic and multiconfessional populations on the frontier, which were accommodated, created and manipulated in the making of empire in Russia.⁴ This study of Orthodox women, their storied lives and experiences as monastic women, wives and widows, as well as prisoners and penitents, offers a multi-dimensional view of the Siberian frontier that has not been told. The migration of women to Siberia was not unusual, and some made the journey willingly; more often, however, the movement of families to the frontier was involuntary, based on the directives of the state, the will of landlords, and the exigent circumstances of disease, famine, or oppression. Women from all social classes were not spared the arduous travel or harsh conditions of the Siberian frontier, and

⁴ Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Empire: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1822-1905*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009); Daniel R. Brower and Edward Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the household as an economic unit relocated as the best means for survival and social support. The wives and families of exiled prisoners, merchants, Cossacks, soldiers, governors, and bureaucrats accompanied them, and the entire family functioned as an imperial presence in unsettled frontier environs.

Despite the presence of women on the Siberian frontier, the names of explorers, military leaders, governors, churchmen, and industrialists are those generally associated with the expansion and establishment of empire in Siberia. In telling the women's stories, I also aim to recover their names, which have faded in to obscurity and lain dormant within monastic registers, court filings, property holdings, and other correspondence held in archival records. The frontier environment accorded women even more opportunities than in European Russia to assume positions left absent by men, and to control land holdings and to create communities in monastic spaces. Women were more limited than men in their social, economic, and governmental roles and functions in Siberia, and all of Russia, but that did not preclude them from participations in imperial expansion. Frontier spaces historically have been considered spaces where men had the potential to make their fortune and reputation, but it is also a place where women can rise from obscure backgrounds. Capable women despite their class or ethnicity can end up in a position of authority.

In telling stories of Orthodox women in Siberia, the narrative most often leads back to men. With this in mind, this study attempts to do the opposite, by going against the grain, and interrogates frontier records to recover stories of women within the largely male dominated narrative of Siberian expansion. From the stories of women, we learn the qualities of the frontier, which were connected to the imperial practices of the church in Siberia. The interplay of power on the frontier in the realms of gender and empire occurred on an intimate, personal level,

and was mediated in complex and unexpected ways. At times, gender structures reflected imperial models that promoted unequal power. At other times, conventional gender roles of women deviated, and created contradictions to the narrative of singularly powerful males as the dominant productive force in the construction and maintenance of a frontier community. In counterpoint to the male centered narrative, female rulers in eighteenth-century Russia implicitly and explicitly managed the building and governance of empire, yet little if any scholarship has examined the projection of female rule in Siberia.

Despite the avowedly autocratic character of the Russian state, it was a myriad of individuals who enunciated and implemented imperial policies on the Siberian frontier, and, indeed, throughout the expanding empire. Women rulers stood at the very top of this hierarchy during much of the eighteenth century, and the empire-oriented aspects of female sovereigns prior to Catherine II have received insufficient scholarly attention. However, they are not the focus of this dissertation. Instead, I will examine how women's lives and experiences manifested on the Siberian frontier by focusing primarily on daily interactions in religious and secular life and smaller actors who lived in Western Siberian villages, towns and convents. These women were not simply colonial subjects, doubly dominated by the imperial governing authorities and by men on the frontier. Instead, women functioned as agents of empire through imperial postings as wives and female relatives of military governors; as voluntary or exiled household members that accompanied peasants, soldiers, merchants, and tradesmen, and established communities in towns and villages; and as women who took monastic vows. Whether deliberately or merely by virtue of their presence, they transmitted Russian religious and cultural traditions, supported regional economic development, and maintained the institutional presence and political agenda of the Russian state. Women who migrated to Siberia,

and those born and raised later on the frontier, were indelibly influenced by their multiethnic, and multiconfessional surroundings. At the same time their active participation in the expansion of Siberia also impacted the language, religious identity, habits, and customs of non-Russian peoples on the frontier.

Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, in charting ancient patterns of empires, articulated complexity of empires by arguing, “Sovereignty can be shared, layered and transformed.”⁵ By applying this framework to the study of women within the expansion of the Siberian frontier, my dissertation will look inside the practices of empire, which reveal varied and ever changing definitions of maleness and femaleness in a frontier setting. Where Burbank and Cooper show that “politics of difference” was a careful imperial practice of accommodating competing interests of indigenous elites, settlers, and intermediaries, their claim of imperial powers “governing different people differently”⁶ can be expanded to include female gendered experience. The category of gender, of course, cannot be explained uniformly, but rather intersected with social order, marital status, religion, and ethnicity. Gendered relationships, and the performance of gender, were as complex and multifaceted as empire itself.

Due to the nature of instability within the colonial project, local conditions relied on accommodation, creation and manipulation of diverse populations. Therefore, by examining the female performance of gender on the Siberian frontier, this work will argue that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century frontier must also include an analysis of sovereignty on a smaller stage – the relationships of power and the politics of difference between men and women within the intimate setting of the home, as well as public life in secular and sacred society.

⁵ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 22.

⁶ Burbank and Cooper, 12, 176.

Michael Khodarkovsky and other historians contend Russian extension of its southern and eastern boundaries was not haphazard, but rather arose from a deliberate process of expansion and colonization with objectives of incorporating conquered people and territories into the imperial domain.⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century, Russia had expanded to the imperial borderland of the Ottoman, Persian, and Chinese empires, reflecting their relative success in securing settled communities from nomadic raids. Since the early seventeenth century, the mission of securing the frontier had profound consequences for newly arrived communities on the Siberian frontier. Although Khodarkovsky dismisses the technological innovations of agriculture as the driving factor in establishing empire, he accurately identifies settling, colonizing and evangelizing new lands as a conscious shift of imperial policy in the eighteenth century, which conformed to modern European models of imperialism.⁸ Although his work is primarily concerned with the transition from “wild steppe” to imperial borderlands south of the interior of Siberia—that is, the area of focus in this dissertation--a similar interaction between frontier security and settlement affected the socio-economic conditions for women in Siberia. The eighteenth century was a transformative period between frontier security and colonial settlement. Both of these imperial strategies of the eighteenth century influenced community development and social formations inside the intimate setting of the home, as well as within public life in secular and sacred society.

The twofold interests in the security and settlement of Siberia elicited local pragmatic responses to the peculiar conditions of the changing frontier colonial environment. Between military service and long journeys to extract resources, men were frequently away from home for

⁷ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 1-3.

⁸ Khodarkovsky, 6.

extended periods. Military historian Valerii Puzanov shows that men from artisan and peasant families were regularly absent from the Eastern Urals and Western Siberian towns and villages, called to provide labor for the construction of frontier defenses.

In addition, local “dragoons” or paramilitary groups were required to provide military service in Siberia from the end of the sixteenth century until the 1730s.⁹ From that time, regular military units were sent to the region. However, that did not fully alleviate the Siberian population of this burden, because Peter the Great’s military reform instituted a policy of conscription into the army. The Russian Empire of the eighteenth century engaged in frequent military campaigns, deploying infantry armies drafted from among the peasantry. In addition to paramilitary and military service, older outposts were expanded into towns. To construct and defend the new settlements, Russian authorities did not bring men from the center, but primarily relied upon local artisans and workers. As Andrew Gentes points out, it was not until the 1830s did systematic *katorga*, or forced labor become prevalent until Mikhail Speranskii’s nineteenth-century reforms.¹⁰ Therefore, defense and construction of outpost relied upon the shifting mobility of men. Men moved across mobile frontier spaces while women were often consigned to sedentary roles as members of society. However, it was the sedentary population, including women, that developed cultural, social and economic networks of exchange in frontier towns and villages. When social, military and religious reforms emerged in the centers of European Russia at the beginning of the eighteenth century, they had profound effects in the peripheries of the Russian empire.

⁹ V.D. Puzanov, “Voennaia sluzhba krest'ian Sibiri v XVII-XVIII vv.,” *Voprosy istorii*, No. 2, February (2014): 98; see also, *Voennye faktory russkoi kolonizatsii zapadnoi Sibiri: konets XVI-XVII v.*, (Moscow: Aleteia, 2010).

¹⁰ Andrew Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590–1822*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 256.

In response to changing social circumstances, men and women fluidly and pragmatically adopted a variety of domestic roles, economic tasks, and social responsibilities in rural and urban locations. The relatively small number of ethnic Russian women and men and the limited extended family support system available to recent arrivals in Siberia also complicated the establishment of settlements, which profoundly contrasted models of European Russia. Since the initial settlement of Siberia in the late sixteenth century, the ever-changing economic, social and political circumstances, along with the comparative absence of serfdom in Siberia, sometimes offered women social as well as physical mobility, but typically at a price. Scholarship on the function of the army as a social institution, and its impact on social development of civilian society has produced valuable studies on Russia as a whole, but gives little attention to particular conditions of Siberia.¹¹ However, Elise Kimerling Wirschafter's study of the "burden of defense" and conscription on social development is applicable to Siberia, particularly in regard to the numerous social welfare problems created by active and retired soldiers from lower ranks.¹² Wirschafter noted how lower-ranking soldiers and their families crossed legal, social, and moral boundaries, and the personal costs they endured. The extraction of human resources in service to the state was many times at odds with establishing a settled frontier.

The resourcefulness of women during periods of permanence and mobility, as well as their occasional non-conformity, made them an essential element on the Siberian frontier. The

¹¹ John L. H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1462-1874*, (New York: 1985); William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1992); Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, (Chicago, 1971); and Walter M. Pinter, "The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia, 1725-1914," *Russian Review*, No. 43 (July 1984): 231-59.

¹² Elise Kimerling Wirschafter, "Social Misfits: Veterans and Soldiers' Families in Servile Russia," *Journal of Military History*, No. 59 (April 1995): 215-36.

adaptability of women in a frontier setting reflected individual and personal reactions to the social, economic and geographic boundaries of the frontier. Russian settlers necessarily emulated in part the semi-nomadic practices of native people who for centuries had followed the ebb and flow of resources, climatic conditions, and necessities empires placed upon them. Whether the Mongol or Russian empires were extracting tribute or enforcing settlement of native lands, indigenous peoples and ethnic Russians (Slavs) found pragmatic methods that allowed for their survival, but did not necessarily reflect the demands of the Church and state.

Women's adaptability could leave them vulnerable to charges of immorality and hubris. The practices of non-canonical marriage, bigamy, fornication, and other violations existed alongside religious devotion and conversion of native peoples, but often such sexual misbehavior was punished only informally or even overlooked completely. Russian Orthodox Church hierarchs and pious imperial officials bemoaned the loss of moral standards and made efforts to curb excesses and impose stabilizing customs. Concern for family honor was the norm in European Russia, but was defined in a variety of ways among native peoples. Church hierarchs and state officials sought to regulate the practice of taking native concubines, while indigenous tribes shared women as an offer of alliance or goodwill. Railing against vices of Siberian settlement, ruling officials enlisted "proper" Russian women, imagining that their presence would help "civilize" the frontier. Investigating domestic life, and how men and women, whether native Tatars, animist tribes, or ethnic Russians, or those of mixed ethnicities, provides a way to understand how ethnicity and gender fit into frontier existence, and how the roles and identities of men and women were reshaped on the Siberian frontier.

The ways in which a colonizer and the colonized interacted in even more remote spaces of the Russian empire is the subject of Gwenn Miller's study of the Russian and Alutiiq people

on Kodiak Island from the 1780s to the 1820s.¹³ Her in-depth examination provides a framework for assessing relationships between Russian and native peoples in Siberia, and underlines the importance considering specific colonial mixed populations, and the need to attend to the intimate spaces of empire. Previous scholars and imperial ethnologists give divergent accounts of the practice of concubinage between Russian men and native women in Siberia, which propagated overarching generalizations of the passivity of native women and the mercenary nature of men, while accenting the primitive qualities of both.¹⁴ In contrast, Miller examines the exploitation and dependence of Russian men in Alutiiq communities. In the maritime environment of Kodiak Island Russian fur traders, or *promyshlenniki*, relied on Alutiiq men to hunt sea otters, while they held Alutiiq women and children as hostages to coerce native hunters to venture out at dangerous distances to locate the increasingly elusive prey. Miller shows how the Russian relied on the Alutiiq for survival, and how Russian men and Alutiiq women approached unions that could be both, “emotionally tense and economically convenient, or expedient and loving.”¹⁵ She notes the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church to implant Christianity through instituting marriage practices, which produced ethnically mixed *kreol* children were presumed to be Orthodox, and were viewed as more capable Russian subjects than

¹³ Gwenn A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010).

¹⁴ James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony 1581-1990*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67-69; N. M. Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, 280-282; G. F. Miller, *Istoriia Sibiri*, vol. 2, (Moscow: Izdatel'skaia firma "Vostochnaia literatura" RAN), 1999, 87, 374-5. Originally published as, *Sibiskaia istoriia – Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia i izvestiia o uchenykh delakh*, t. 20, (St. Petersburg, 1764).

¹⁵ Gwenn A. Miller, ““The Perfect Mistress of Russian Economy”: Sighting the Intimate on a Colonial Alaskan Terrain, 1784-1821,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 305.

their native mothers.¹⁶ Similarly in Siberia, prescribed marriage practices were one way of integrating native populations with fur traders who were themselves often the offspring of previous unions between native Siberians and Russian men. This process intimately involved native women as wives and mothers of a new generation of Russian subjects that were connected to Russian and native cultural traditions. While the state benefited from the production of new citizens, whether via birth in mixed unions or through conversion of natives, it did not advance an overt program of Russification. Rather, it regarded regularized marriages and conversions as a moral imperative, albeit one with beneficial practical results. In the context of confessionalism and assimilation, Russian attitudes and outlooks are situated within the eighteenth-century Western imperial practice of rational categorization to mark and identify lands and subjects of the empire.

The informal modification in marriage practices was not wholly due to Russian settlers adapting to local native customs as the Church sometimes feared, but was in response to the transient nature of constructing fortifications, churches, and towns, and then defending these fledgling settlements. Similar displacement of families, and drifting populations of men and women not only existed in frontier settings, but also occurred in the imperial capital of St. Petersburg during its construction in the early eighteenth century. In her study of marital irregularities records from the eighteenth century, Robin Bisha notes, "...parish priests['] attempt[ed] to reconcile the popular conception about conjugal pairs with the ecclesiastical definition of valid marriage, allowing a system of values, which differed significantly from that

¹⁶ Gwenn A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 77-103.

of the institutional state and Church to coexist with official values.”¹⁷ Non-canonical marriage, bigamy, and spousal abuse showed the stress on familial order in the imperial capital, which, like Siberia, was also a destination for population mobility, and the majority of cases involved regimental soldiers stationed in the city.¹⁸ Even in the more fluid environment of the Siberian frontier, women were still held to be more responsible for violations of propriety and morality than men were. Much like cases found in the St. Petersburg Spiritual Consistory, the Tobol’sk Spiritual Consistory also contains hundreds of depositions detailing marital abuse, bigamy, trigamy, fornication, and non-canonical marriage. Whether in the imperial capital, or the provincial capital of Tobol’sk, or Western Siberian fortification towns, soldiers’ wives from various social ranks appear in archival records. They traveled back and forth between nearby villages fleeing abusive husbands, or in search of work, or in the management of household affairs.¹⁹ The archival records from the Tobol’sk Spiritual Consistory suggest that the practice of bigamy and trigamy in Western Siberia was distinct from the phenomena in the imperial capital. The majority of depositions accusing bigamy from the Tobol’sk Spiritual Consistory were brought against husbands in Siberia, whereas evidence from the St. Petersburg Spiritual Consistory appears to give a balanced account of bigamy arising from non-canonical marriages. Yet, the gendered disparities in the ever-present charges of licentiousness were primarily leveled against women in St. Petersburg, Tobol’sk, and other provincial locations in and beyond Siberia. Certainly, men were involved in cases of immorality, but the initial accusations first brought female conduct into question.

¹⁷ Robin Bisha, “Marriage, Church, and Community in St. Petersburg,” in *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn, (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 227.

¹⁸ Bisha, 233.

¹⁹ Bisha, 234.

The disparity in the number of men and women, characteristic of St. Petersburg in its early decades, also was manifested in Siberia.

They have perceived the limited number of appropriate—that is, Russian—women as a crisis, and they have posited that the presence of a substantial population of Russian women was a prerequisite for settled and civilized rule.²⁰ The absence of appropriate women was perceived as a crisis, or made a prerequisite for settled and civilized rule. Other studies of the convergence of gender and empire have drawn certain (universalizing) conclusions about the exchange of power between men and women, and the inclusive or hegemonic bonds between persons of the same sex.²¹ Their ideas are based mostly on Western concepts of masculinity and femininity, but the convergence of gender and empire in Siberia did not follow the same trajectories of power and the politics of difference as in their Western counterparts. The disparity in the gender ratio has been exaggerated, because it disregards the substantial population of native and non-orthodox females. Russian Orthodox women were imbedded in the maintenance of empire in Siberia, and unlike in European colonial spaces their presence did not mark the boundaries of

²⁰ P. N. Butskinskii, *Zaselenie Sibiri i byt pervykh eia naseľnikov. Izsliedovanie*, Khar'kov: Tip. Gubernskago pravleniia, 1889; N. N. Ogloblin, "Zhenskii vopros v Sibiri v XVII veke'," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, vol. 41, 1890, 197-198; V. A. Aleksandrov, *Russkoe Naselenie Sibirii XVII-XVIII v.*, Moscow: Nauka, 1964; N. A. Minenko, "Gorodskaiia sem'ia zapadnoi Sibiri na rubezhe XVII-XVIII v.," in *Istorii gorodov Sibiri dosovetskogo perioda (XVII - nachalo XX v.)*, Novosibirsk: Nauka Sibirskoe otdelenia, 1977). Additional example of imperial and Soviet historiography exist, and the overall perspective in accounting for women on the frontier continues to be reproduced in Western scholarship on Siberia - Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors; Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 44; James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony 1581-1990*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67-68; E. M. Stolberg (ed.) *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia's Wild East*, (Frankfurt-am-Main; Berlin: Peter Lang, 2005), 29-42.

²⁰ The reporting of lack of acceptable women on the frontier began with the establishment of the Siberian Eparchy (Archbishopric) in 1620, and was reiterated in the social history of Siberia to the present day.

²¹ Andrew Gentes, "'Licentious Girls' and Frontier Domesticators: Women and Siberian Exile from the Late 16th to the Early 19th Centuries," *Sibirica*, 3 (1), 2003: 3-20.

empire. Claims that soldiers on leave to European Russia brought back brides to sell them is also inaccurate, as most military men in Siberia were local and if granted leave, which is unlikely, they ventured to their home villages in Siberia.²² Nevertheless, Russian Orthodox women were present and imbedded in the maintenance of empire in Siberia, and unlike in European colonial spaces their presence did not mark the boundaries of empire. Russians in the seventeenth century did not yet share Western Europeans' ideas of racial superiority with the consequent stigmatization of miscegenation.

In early-modern and imperial Russia, gender relations and the performance of gender were distinct, as women were recognized as powerful actors on their own behalf, and upon the behalf of others. Unlike in much of Western Europe in this period, women in Russian society were neither viewed as morally superior to men, nor economically dependent upon men.²³ Some current scholarship characterizes women in eighteenth-century Russia as victims or pawns of patriarchy; limited to the role, influence, and legal standing men would deign to give them.²⁴ This view is an outdated interpretation of Russian women's history, based in an inaccurate reading of women's legal standing.²⁵ General imperial tendencies in the expansion of Siberia employed overt control of spaces, resources and peoples, yet techniques of governance also established subtle forms of power that were malleable and compliant to fluctuating political,

²² David N. Collins, "Sexual imbalance in frontier communities: Siberia and New France to 1760," *Sibirica*, vol. 4, no. 2 (October 2004), 162-185. Collins' article rightly calls into question limited Soviet sources that propagandized a 1:1 ratio in the peaceful advance of peasant men and women, but also misrepresents the admittedly hazy and incomplete population demographics of early modern Siberia as an acute need for women.

²³ Judith Vowles, "Marriage à la russe," in *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*, eds. Jane T. Costlow, et. al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 56.

²⁴ Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590–1822*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

²⁵ For updated scholarship on women's legal standing in Russia see: Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*; George Weickhardt, "Legal Rights of Women in Russia, 1100-1750," *Slavic Review*, 1996; and Michelle LaMarche Marrese, *A Noble Woman's Kingdom*.

economic, and social necessities of constructing empire. In the expansion and bid for control on the Siberian frontier, the fluid performance of masculinity and femininity allowed for repeated inversion of hegemonic gender roles, which were accommodated and informally accepted. When gender roles deviated it often was to advance local or pragmatic interests, which indirectly coincided with the aims of imperial governance.

Ann Stoler's influential work on empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sees intimate relationships as "microsites of governance," exploring the private worlds of "sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and child rearing."²⁶ This project, in contrast, will amplify the fundamental connection between the affairs of empire by focusing on social formations and the cultural production of gender on the Siberian frontier. The institutions of the Church and state played a key role in the complex web of gendered relationships, but the cultural production of gender overlapped as well as undermined the multifaceted cultural, economic, military, and political aspirations of Russian imperial expansion. As Stoler points out, intimacy was never subject to complete imperial control. However, Foucault's claims about the pervasiveness of "biopower" that employed diverse technologies and indirect regulations of power could pacify bodies and manage entire populations in the emerging modern nation-states in the eighteenth

²⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 13; Ann Laura Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race, and Morality in Colonial Asia," in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo (Berkeley, 1991), 87. "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History*, 88 (Dec. 2001), 829, 831, 844, 846-47. For a related study on intimacy in the Russian colonial setting of Alaska, see Gwen Miller, "The perfect mistress of Russian economy: sighting the intimate on a colonial Alaskan terrain, 1784-1821," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 297-324.

century.²⁷ Church and state institutions in early modern Russia, and in other eras and geographic spaces, attempted to encode and subjugate its human subjects despite their persistence to elude regulations and undermine expectations managed from the center. Management of the established social order on the frontier of Siberia had to rely upon emerging local mechanisms of governance as part of the body politic, which was not wholly based on the primacy of an individual absolute ruler, but also on empowered local authorities who interpreted the need for surveillance and scrutiny of its local inhabitants. Although Stoler and Foucault primarily focus on the West in their assessment of the limits of imperial power, and all-encompassing colonial rule, their concepts of “microsites of governance” and the pervasiveness of “biopower” are applicable to Siberia, complicating and enriching conventional, monolithic understandings of imperial and colonial practices. The deliberate but disjointed processes of colonizing and evangelizing the new lands of Siberia occurred within both the private and public worlds, and women were key players in both. Examining the private and public worlds of gender and empire will help to explain the deliberate, but irregular process of colonizing and evangelizing new lands.

Monastic communities served as a bridge between communal and intimate life in Siberia. Local monasteries had a foot in both worlds. As institutions, monasteries politically and economically acted on behalf of larger state interests to promote economic endeavors of monastic lands by drawing new lands and resources, human and natural, into the economic

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, (London: Penguin, 1998), 140. Foucault examines the regulation and subjugation of bodies and the control of populations that made possible the emergence of the modern nation state. Russia as an empire did not, theoretically, fit with his framework, but as Burbank and Cooper point out there is no direct progression between empires to nation-state.

networks of the empire.²⁸ Additionally, monasteries and convents served as fortresses and prisons in European Russia, and on the frontier.²⁹ The integration of native peoples through systematic conversion was not a feature of Orthodoxy, but convents, monasteries, and churches were envisioned as institutional models of religious practice for co-religionists, and indigenous populations who converted to the Orthodox faith.³⁰ In Siberia, a form of ecclesiastic imperialism was articulated in monasteries and convents, which were leveraged by ecclesiastical regimes as tools for maintaining political and social order by serving as sites of religious authority, and facilities for confinement. In total, they legitimized and reinforced the power of the state and Church over its subjects. In the hierarchical and categorized imperial borderlands Russian Orthodox women were authorized administrative control, and privileged with informal authority over other ethnicities and confessions.

On the intimate level, monasteries provided men and women an alternative to domestic life and marriage by supplying intimacy and quasi-familial relationships within acceptable, conventional homosocial bonds, which extended beyond the political and economic realms of

²⁸ Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire*, 117-176.

²⁹ Eve Levin, "Prison or Asylum: The Involuntary Commitment of the Insane to Monasteries in Early Modern Russia," in *Seeing Muscovy Anew: Politics, Institutions, Culture, Essays in Honor of Nancy Shields Kollmann*, ed. Michael S. Flier, Valerie Kivelson, Erika Monahan, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington: Slavica, 2017), 245-262.

³⁰ Works on Conversion: Paul Bushkovitch, "Orthodoxy and Islam in Russia 988-1725," in *Religion und Integration in Moskau-Russland: Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen 14.-17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ludwig Steindorff, (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2010), 117-143; Agnès Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 8-10; Matthew P. Romaniello, "Mission Delayed: The Russian Orthodox Church after the Conquest of Kazan," *Church History* Vol. 76, No. 3 (September 2007): 511-540; Paul Werth, "Coercion and Conversion: Violence and the Mass Baptism of the Volga Peoples, 1740-55," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 4/3 (2003): 543-570; Janet Martin, "Multiethnicity in Muscovy: A Consideration of Christian and Muslim Tatars in the 1550s-1580s," *Journal of Early Modern History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001): 1-23.

monasticism.³¹ At the same time, though, the intimate setting of monasteries and convents in Siberia witnessed the erosion of power, so that certain prisoners and jailers found ways to insist upon their own approaches and preferences. Just as sovereignty was “shared, layered and transformed”³² throughout the empire, power relationships in heterosocial and homosocial communities in Siberia at times conformed to and sustained ordered social relationships. At other times, expectations and behaviors were altered based on continual change and mobility, both spatial and hierarchical.

In adapting to local frontier conditions, women accepted and assumed positions of authority. Women were overt participants in maintaining order and discipline in both spiritual and secular realms on the Siberian frontier. Alongside men, but more often in place of absent or preoccupied male hierarchs and officials, women also served as active agents of empire for imperial and colonial purposes. Based upon imperial and autocratic ideologies of European Russia, men primarily dominated the political and economic control of native peoples and settler populations. However, women also propagated moral and physical control of the local populace, and female prisoners dispatched to Siberia. In frontier settlements and in monasteries, female counterparts of Church hierarchs and state officials dominated, constructed, administered, and regulated social and religious life. Resistant imperial subjects who violated dictates of social order and undermined political authority with its expansive imperial designs, were exposed to at best coercion, and at worst brutal violence. However, agents of imperial power who consented,

³¹ A further study, and examination of the social bonds between persons and groups of the same sex, and the distinction between vertical/hierarchical homosociality and horizontal homosociality, see Nils Hammarén and Thomas Johansson, *Homosociality: In Between Power and Intimacy*, SAGE Open, January 10, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013518057> (first accessed on February 18, 2018).

³² Burbank and Cooper, 22.

and loyally performed socio-economic and political imperial functions were to supervise the compliance and correction of others. Physical confinement and limited mobility, as well as cultural subjugation, were used by the agents of imperial power – namely nuns and abbesses--as corrective tools on individuals and groups, which crossed boundaries of gender, class, and ethnic distinctions. Accordingly, in the process of creating and establishing imperial rule on the Siberian frontier, colonized natives and settler communities experienced both men and women as colonizer and imperial agent.

One of the major functions of empire was to define relationships of power amongst individuals based on gender, class, and ethnicity. How gender was articulated in a frontier society of men, as well as women in Siberia, will also be a major purpose of this work. Within the function of empire was the control of dissent, and exercise of corrective power directed by church and state institutions. Siberia served as an imperial space of imprisonment and correction for both women and men throughout the Russian empire. Yet, how and why power was negotiated and performed in communal and domestic life (heterosocial), and monastic (homosocial) environments among men and women varied widely. In the sacred sphere abbesses and other nuns were directly charged with authority over the supervision, discipline and punishment of their female prisoners (*kolodnitsi*) held at the convents in central Russia and in Siberia. In the setting of monastic prisons, women directly influenced conditions, length of confinement, and ultimately the fate of their female prisoners. In the secular realm wives of seventeenth-century Siberian military governors (*voevody*) held a great deal of authority, and used their power to punish both men and women not only in the absence, but also in the presence of their husbands. One wife of the local *voevoda* was described as personally carrying out corporal punishments by whipping local women in her yard, as well as listening to the petitions

of men for mercy.³³ Women in both sacred and secular spheres had the authority to impose order and discipline over their charges, and they were held responsible for their failure to control them, as well as for abuses of their power.

These fluid and gendered interactions in Siberian society existed within the program of ecclesiastical imperialism that sought to implant Russian Orthodox Christian belief, while expanding the land holdings of the Russian Orthodox Church. The program of ecclesiastical imperialism was not formally annunciated with decrees from Moscow following the so-called “conquest” of Siberia in the 1580s and 1590s, but rather developed organically after the first Archbishop of Tobol’sk was appointed in 1620, and arrived in Siberia in 1621. Church hierarchs who arrived in Siberia acknowledged the errant practices of their co-religionists in lands that were dominated by non-Russians, and also recognized vast tracts of land that were unclaimed. The project of the wealthy merchant and industrialist Grigorii Stroganov is often the singular picture of the “opening” of Siberia when one of his Cossack security forces, led by atman Ermak Timofeevich, was exploring additional lands to expand trade routes with the interior of Siberia, and gain new fur-trading resources. Although the church would not solely finance the building of towns, govern free peasants and townspeople, and set up its own security forces, it similarly petitioned the tsar for land and peasants to establish monasteries and convents under an existing administrative and legal structure loyal to the tsar. The role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the expansion of Siberian lands has not adequately been accounted for in the history of Siberia. The church was not merely a legitimizer of empire to spread “civilizing” institutional forms of Christian belief, but through the initiative of church hierarchs on the ground in Siberia, and

³³ A. A. Liutsidarskaia, “Zhenshchiny v XVII veke: po materialam istorii Sibiri.” *Gumanitarnye nauki v Sibiri*, No.3, (2003): 13.

enabled by the Muscovite empire in the seventeenth century, monastic land expansion became the instrument to claim territory, and institute rule over settlers and native inhabitants.

In examining the presence of women inside the functions of ecclesiastic imperialism, I will look to the methodological frameworks of “new imperial histories.” This approach calls for complicating the narration of the past in order to produce more than one generalizing explanation, with the goal of “estranging” the historical reality of empire. The “estrangement” proposed by historians Ilya Gerasimov, Alexander Semyonov and others, draws on a concept based in Russian Formalist literary criticism that alienates or “defamiliarizes” the object of study to uncover deeper meanings, “and produces a picture of a strikingly strange, indeed, an unfamiliar and alien world” of nuanced imperial situations.³⁴ By looking at the unfamiliar world of women and empire, we can see, as Gerasimov notes, the “tensions” and “scandals of empire” in particularly poignant conditions of the Siberian frontier, which go beyond descriptive grand imperial narratives. Gerasimov, and a growing collective of scholars of Russian Empire around the globe, draw upon Ann Laura Stoler’s theoretical view of empire, which considers the “blurred genres of rule,” and the contingent process of “imperial formations” rather than the inevitable rise and fall of empires.³⁵ These scholars look to the multiple meanings of empire, investigating knowledge production and the validity of methods in the study of empire. How scholars examine empires and imperial situations speaks to the diversity of frontier life that included the presence, activity, and complicity of women as agents of empire.

³⁴ Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov, *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, (Boston: Brill, 2009) 3-4.

³⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue, *Imperial Formations*, (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 8.

Under conditions of cognitive dissonance in recent historical studies of Russian imperial history, which are often produced when searching for stable qualities and taxonomies of empire, Gerasimov and Semyonov suggest “approaching empire as a category of analysis and a context-setting framework of languages of self-description of imperial experience.”³⁶ Within the “languages of self-description, and self-rationalization,” Russian imperial experience is reconsidered as multilayered, uneven, and dynamically diverse, in which explaining the past and the present does not rely upon one noncontroversial narrative or typology of empire. Gerasimov recognizes that “historically constituted diversity” is the central feature of imperial settings, and critiques the teleological instruments of modern social sciences that reduce the uneven and diverse character of imperial experience to “manageable, one-dimensional diversity of nationalities, regions of empire, or confessions.”³⁷ New approaches to the study of empire argue that specific imperial experiences actually determine the form and function of an empire. The distinguishing feature of an ideal empire is “strategic relativism,” in which a sliding scale of differences produced multidimensional spaces of empire, while empires themselves claimed an exceptional status, due to their unique brand of imperial statecraft.³⁸ In seeking to deconstruct the voices and genealogies of empire, rather than continue using single dichotomies of “empire-nation-state,” “metropoly-colony,” “continental-overseas,” as well as the typologies of pre-modern and modern empires and the analytical categories of sovereignty, citizenship, nationality, and race, they argue for the juxtaposition of these analytical modes to produce more than one reading of the same story. Thus, examining women and Orthodoxy in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, does precisely this by accepting the diversity and hybridity of frontier

³⁶ Gerasimov, et. al., 17.

³⁷ Gerasimov, et. al., 23-24.

³⁸ Gerasimov, et. al., 20.

environs, problematizing the historical reality, and suggesting that we can no longer speak of women and their relationship to the Russian Orthodox Church on the Siberian frontier in neutral terms.

In this study, I do not attempt to rationalize the experience of empire or determine what sorts of discourses should count as “imperial.” Instead, I show how the examination of women on the Siberian frontier can reveal how frontier spaces were shaped amongst the numerous spaces of the Russian Empire. The examination of women on the frontier of Siberia can reveal how frontier spaces were shaped during imperial expansion as one of numerous spaces of empire.

Within the framework of cultural history that seeks to retrieve the cultural and social world that more conventional histories do not record, Orthodoxy in Siberia has been examined as a sacred space within the heterogeneous populations of Russia by Valerie Kivelson. Her work on seventeenth-century cartography reconsiders Siberian territorial expansion not as an outgrowth of the “autocratic state run by a despotic tsar,” but as an integrated location of spatial hierarchies.³⁹ Her assessment of Russian history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which was profoundly concerned with “spatial control and the conceptions of moving in space,” was fundamentally tied to the institution of serfdom and the expansion of empire. Siberian plowlands and pastures held both political and theological significance for Orthodox Muscovy, and for the people--peasants, townspeople, military servicemen, and clerics—who settled these spaces. Kivelson’s work underscores that in the search for profit and power in the conquest and colonization of Siberia the land was imagined in spatial and religious terms for both Muscovite

³⁹ Valerie A. Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 10.

authorities and subjects of the tsar. In mimicking techniques of Orthodox iconography in mapmaking, provincial scribes and military men literally charted their spatial and confessional relationships to Siberian lands.⁴⁰ In this dissertation, the analysis of the establishment of monasteries and convents in Siberia, with their land acquisition and implantation of Orthodoxy, builds upon Kivelson's work. Details of the program of ecclesiastical imperialism provides concrete examples of the spread of Orthodoxy and Russianness as a divinely ordained destiny of the Russian state envisioned by Muscovite and Orthodox authorities as well as the new inhabitants of Siberian lands. At the same time Orthodoxy was enacted by ordinary men and women who held, as Kivelson notes, a "spatial position within the empire, [and] could legitimately imagine themselves to be active, fully acknowledge members in an inclusive and particularly blessed community."⁴¹ Women were part of this inclusive community that was rooted in complex spatial relationships in the society of men, the church, and the state. Thus, examining the social position of women is particularly relevant for considering in the implantation of Orthodoxy in the expansion of empire in Siberia.

With the establishment of the Siberian Eparchy in 1620, the Russian Orthodox Church asserted the need for a formal presence to regulate Orthodoxy, and rein in popular beliefs and practices that had developed in its absence. Isolde Thyret's important work on the agenda of early Siberian archbishops to assert the seat of the Siberian eparchy and their own privileged position in God's providential plan for Siberia, has an additional meaning for the colonizer and the colonized.⁴² Thyret's careful examination of the rhetorical position of the Orthodox Church

⁴⁰ Kivelson, 10-12.

⁴¹ Kivelson, 11.

⁴² Isolde Thyret, "The Esipov Chronicle and the Creation of the Concept of Siberia as a Special Sacred Space," *Russian History*, no. 44 (2017), 594-607.

shows how Siberia was envisioned as a sacred space that offered redemption to the non-Orthodox men and women, who were spiritual conduits manifesting God's presence among the Orthodox that flowed in both directions across the periphery and the center. Eve Levin's understanding of *dvoeverie* is particularly instructive for imagining how the center and peripheral exchange occurred on the Siberian frontier, not only in rhetorical forms voiced by church authorities, but also between popular religion and established church practices merged and adapted to local conditions.⁴³

The imperial history of the expansion of Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries impacted women differently from men. Within the overly masculinized narrative of empire, the roles women played in the construction of empire and the extent of female agency have traditionally been ignored. The analytical framework for considering gender as a historical category of analysis began nearly forty years ago with Joan Scott asking historical questions about "how the meanings of sexed bodies are produced, deployed, and changed."⁴⁴ How this translated into the study of gender in Russian history was a multifaceted approach that grew out of the study of women's history, and to a large extent remains grounded in that field in both Russian and the Western historiography. Eve Levin's study of gendered aspects of sexuality showed how canon law influenced sexual practices in Slavic society from the tenth to the eighteenth century. She argues that the stringent sexual behavior standards of the Orthodox Church were designed to ensure social stability, while making allowances for sexual violations that did not threaten the family. Levin's larger argument of the ability of the church to adapt and

⁴³ Eve Levin, "Dvoeverie and Popular Religion," in *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, ed. Stephen K. Batalden, (Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 31-52.

⁴⁴ Joan W. Scott, "Unanswered Questions," *The American Historical Review*, Volume 113, Issue 5, December 2008:1422–1430, <https://doi-org.www2.lib.ku.edu/10.1086/ahr.113.5.1422>

negotiate local conditions, and its recognition of the futility of imposing sexual standards or religious belief from above is helpful for understanding the fusion of religions and cultures in the implantation of Orthodoxy in Siberia.⁴⁵ The analogous conditions of Christianity, Islam, and pagan belief in Siberia also shows a syncretic relationship in shaping popular practice, as the Church used the sacred space of Siberia to adjust and adapt to local conditions rather than direct confrontation. Thus, the formation of syncretic relationships is not confined to the period of the initial implantation of Orthodoxy, or to the newly baptized indigenous people of Siberia, but was a phenomenon that can be identified in numerous cultural interactions across the Russian Empire. Likewise, the correction of errant sexual practices among Orthodox believers in Siberia was strict, but not rigidly enforced, in order to gain compliance of community members and adoption of normative sexual behavior. The ability of parishioners to redeem themselves through confession and penance reinforced church practices and beliefs, while offering stability, reestablishing order, and providing for the restoration of a victim's honor.

Western studies of gender and empire in Russia are relatively few. Gwenn Miller's study of Russian-Alutiiq unions in late eighteenth-century Russian America provides a framework for assessing the complex relationships and motivations for Russian and native peoples in Siberia to form sexual, marital, and cultural unions. She underlines the importance of considering specific colonial mixed populations, and the need to attend to the intimate spaces of empire.⁴⁶ Her in-depth examination of the frontier environment of the 1780s to the 1820s on Kodiak Island places Alutiiq women as notionally Orthodox. These indigenous women lived with fur traders from

⁴⁵ Eve Levin, *Dvoeverie i Narodnaia Religiiia v Istorii Rossii*, (Moscow: Indrik, 2004); *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900-1700*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

⁴⁶ Gwenn A. Miller, *Kodiak Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2010).

Siberia, although often under duress as hostages, so that Alutiiq men would venture out on dangerous maritime missions to hunt the fur of sea otters. Miller's study provides details of exploitative economic and sexual practices that had been refined over several centuries on the Siberian frontier.

The study of gender and empire in the field of history in Russia has been relegated to two distinct discourses. While the field of empire studies has developed provocative epistemological questions, as sketched above, there is no extensive study of women in frontier environments prior to the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the study of gender in Russian society has also produced innovative scholarship intersecting domestic issues with the public life of women.⁴⁷ As Natalia Pushkareva has noted, "gender studies in history still have to prove their worth in the Russian academic world – and in the general public."⁴⁸ The study of gender in Russia is grouped within the loosely termed women's topics in the field of history, and although the study of

⁴⁷ Monographs and collected volumes that examine a diverse array of topics involving women, but none of the essays focus on women on the Siberian frontier, include: Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine Worobec. *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Beatrice Farnsworth, and Lynne Viola, *Russian Peasant Women*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn, (Hampshire; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Linda Edmondson, (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2001); *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825*, eds. Wendy Rosslyn and Alexandra Tosi, (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2007); Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia: 1700-2000*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004);; Barbara Evans Clements, *A History of Women in Russia: From Earliest Times to the Present*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); John Bushnell, *Russian Peasant Women Who Refused to Marry: Spasovite Old Believers in the 18th-19th Centuries*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Project Muse, 2017). Works that examine women, gender and empire in later periods include: Elena Shulman, *Stalinism on the frontier of empire: women and state formation in the Soviet Far East*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and Abby Schrader, "Unruly Felons and Civilizing Wives: Cultivating Marriage in the Siberian Exile System, 1822-1860," *Slavic Review*, 66:2, (2007): 230-256.

⁴⁸ Natalia Pushkareva and Maria Zolotukhina, "Women's and Gender Studies of the Russian Past: two contemporary trends," *Women's History Review*, Vol. 27, Issue 1 (January 2018): 71-87.

gender emerged at the same time in the Soviet Union as it did in Western countries, it received little interest, and outright hostility from certain sectors of the Soviet academy.⁴⁹ Ideas of feminism and an examination of gender issues that occurred in the West in the 1970s and 1980s were relegated to “bourgeois feminism” by Soviet ideologues that viewed men’s and women’s sociopolitical circumstances as one and the same. Only under perestroika and in the post-Soviet period did Western theories and approaches to gender begin to influence the analysis of historical events and sources among Russian academics, with only a handful of exceptions.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, scholars such as Pushkareva have completed foundational work on the history of women and gender in Russia, and have established this field of historical inquiry in Russia by training and educating future generations, and through persistently advocating for the elevation of women’s history from the shadows of the Russian academy.⁵¹

The study of gender and empire has received more attention from scholars in the past three decades, but generally focuses on the nineteenth century or later periods of imperial expansion of Western colonial powers. From the 1980s to the present day the study of women in the Muscovy and the early Russian Empire has grown, but has drawn less notice than women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from Western scholars. Notable exceptions include Lindsey Hughes who wrote on court life of women, marriage practices, and crime; Michelle

⁴⁹ Natalia Pushkareva, “Gendering Russian History. Women’s History in Russia: Status and Perspectives,” *Aspasia*, Vol. 7 (2013): 200-211.

⁵⁰ Pushkareva, “Gendering Russian History,” 201.

⁵¹ Natalia Pushkareva’s foundational work in the history of women in Russia includes: *Zhenshchiny drevnei Rusi*. Moscow: Mysl’, 1989); *Chastnaia zhizn’ russkoi zhenshchiny: nevesta, zhena, liubovnitsa, (X – pervaiia polovina XIX v.)*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1997); with (trans.) Eve Levin, *Women in Russian history: from the tenth to the twentieth century*, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997); *Gendernoe ravnopravie v Rossii*, (St.Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2008); with M. G. Murav’eva, *Bytovoe nasilie v istorii rossiiskoi povsednevnosti (XI-XXI vv.): kollektivnaia monografiia*, (St. Petersburg: European University, 2012).

Lamarche Marrese, who wrote about women's property rights; Janet M. Hartley, whose work focuses on diversity within social groups of peasants and merchants, education, and family rituals; Brenda Meehan on holy women of Russia, and women's religious communities; Judith Vowles on female sexuality; Evgenii Anisimov, Gary Marker, and John T. Alexander on female rule; and Mary Zirin's compiled bibliography on women and gender in Russia and Eastern Europe.⁵²

Thus, this dissertation pioneers the study of women in the frontier setting of empire. It begins the reconstruction of lived experiences of imperial expansion that pose questions of gendered performance, homosociality, intimacy, sentiment, and memory that have occupied scholars in the study of imperial expansion in different times and places outside of Russia.

The Sources

⁵² Lindsey Hughes, *Sophia, Regent of Russia, 1657-1704*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Michelle Lamarche Marrese, *A Noblewoman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700-1861*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); "Gender and the legal order in Imperial Russia," in *The Cambridge History of Russia. Vol. 2*, ed. D. C. B. Lieven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Janet M. Hartley, *A social history of the Russian empire 1650-1825*, (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999); *Russia, 1762-1825: Military Power, the State, and the People*, (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2008); Brenda Meehan-Waters, *Popular piety, local initiative, and the founding of women's religious communities in Russia, 1764-1907*, (Washington, D.C.: Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, 1987); *Holy Women of Russia: the Lives of Five Orthodox Women Offer Spiritual Guidance for Today*, (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997); Jane T. Costlow, Stephanie Sandler, and Judith Vowles, *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Evgenii Anisimov, *Five Empresses: Court Life in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004); with John T. Alexander (trans.), *Empress Elizabeth: Her Reign and Her Russia, 1741-1761*, (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1995); Gary Marker, *Imperial Saint: The Cult of St. Catherine and the Dawn of Female Rule in Russia*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011); John T. Alexander, *Catherine the Great: Life and Legend*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Mary Fleming Zirin, *Women & gender in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia: a comprehensive bibliography*, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007).

Most works on gender and empire have drawn on particular sorts of sources: memoirs, letters and sometimes oral testimony of the experiences of the colonizer and the colonized. In this context women's voices are more clearly heard and analyzed by scholars bringing forward greater knowledge about the presence of women on the frontier or in imperial settings. The study of women's self-perceptions, sentiments, intimacies and community interactions, as either subjects or objects of colonial rule, has produced innovative and exciting scholarship. However, the source base for earlier periods of imperial expansion in non-western contexts is quite different, and reconstructing the past relies upon what is said of women, and the reported speech of women. In some cases, this has to do with the levels of literacy, but not exclusively. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russia, including Siberia, some of the most literate members of society were monastic and elite women. Still autographed writings are rare, for both men and women, because scribes recorded their petitions and signed in their place. The formal state and church documents that comprise the vast majority of preserved correspondence abided by strict formulae, which were the preserve of official scribes who were exclusively men, outside of the domain of the tsaritsa's household. Literate monastic women could read religious texts, recited prayers, and the psalter at vespers and matins, and pious laywomen also appreciated such readings. Their needs for writing were for mundane tasks associated with accounting for personnel and resources at the convent, but records of their informal writing have rarely been preserved. Authorship, and "ownership" of one's own writing was not a common convention by either men, outside of scribal duties or official correspondence, or women until the eighteenth century, and then only in elite circles. Therefore, the records and accounts of women that remain, are almost exclusively reported speech with words, feelings, and sentiments consigned to the discretion of others to record.

Orthodox literary and didactic texts constitute another source of information about women in premodern Siberia. Most of these texts were produced locally, and few of them have been published in their original form. Nineteenth-century church historians and regional specialists uncovered texts of these sorts in local archives, but added a layer of stylized piety, and an idealized grandeur to the accounts.⁵³ Twentieth century published collections have recovered and published important early sources of chronicles, and correspondence between church hierarchs and officials in Siberia, while writings on monastic activity in Siberia have mainly focused on the exploitative economic and religious practices of the church and state.⁵⁴ Twenty-first century studies of female monasticism in Siberia are limited, but have also examined archival sources, and earlier published accounts, yet remain primarily descriptive with limited analysis of the role of women in society.⁵⁵ In my account of monastic women, and other women in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, I have attempted to remove these layers of Orthodox piety, Marxist ideology, and aim to go beyond descriptive accounts.

Archival Sources

The institutional archives of eighteenth-century Siberia from the Tobol'sk Spiritual Consistory, the Dalmatov Monastery, and the Turinsk Governor's Office survive, and they are a key source-base for this dissertation. In addition, the records of the Preobrazhenskii Prikaz in Moscow, which was responsible for investigations of possible treason, also are an important source, especially for Chapter 7. These sources yield information about women's behavior,

⁵³ G. S. Plotnikov, *Opisanie muzhskogo dalmatovskago obshchezhitel'nago tret'eklassnago monastyria i byvshago pripisnym k nemy zhenskago Vvedenskago Monastyria*, 4th ed. (Ekaterinburg: Tip. gazety "Ural," 1906).

⁵⁴ L. P. Shorokhov, *Korporativno-votchinnoe zemlevladienie i monastyrskie krest'iane v Sibiri v XVII-XVIII vekakh*, (Krasnoiarsk: Krasnoiarskogo Universiteta, 1983).

⁵⁵ E. B. Emchenko, "Zhenskie Monastyri v Rossii," in N. V. Sinitsyna, ed., *Monashestvo i monastyri v Rossii, XI–XX veka: Istoricheskie ocherki*, (Moscow: Nauka, 2005).

especially their non-conforming behavior, and their formal roles in ecclesiastical institutions.

When women are charged with disobedience and illicit or criminal conduct, other aspects of their lives, the lives of others, and the institutional roles of the Church and state on the Siberian frontier are also revealed. In general, the institutional roles for women were limited to religious vocations, and the informal political roles as wives of military governors. The archival sources I discovered preference monastic women, specifically abbesses, and the nuns, the elite prisoners, and female penitents and criminals under their authority. When Orthodox women outside the monastic community came into contact with authorities, the sources reveal that it was based on their own requests or the demands of others.

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND ARGUMENTS

Beginning with the premise that both gender and empire are about relationships of power and the politics of difference, my dissertation will expand the study of empire in Russia to consider multiple and contrasting roles of Orthodox women that were accommodated, created and manipulated on the Siberian frontier. The entangled nature of gender and empire in Siberia will be considered using the theoretical approaches of “new imperial” histories, combined with gender and cultural history to explore the repertoires of gender and empire articulated in presence and performance of women on the Siberian frontier in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first two chapters will focus on Orthodox women in Siberian society. Chapter one will examine the lived experiences of women that were continuous, but unrecognized, sources of economic, political and cultural stability on the Siberian frontier. These women were agents of acculturation that upheld and acknowledged the authority of the Orthodox Church and the Russian state. The multiple roles and functions of women were imbedded within the process of expanding the Russian church and state as it embarked upon an ambitious plan of empire

building in Eurasia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Chapter two, I argue that women in Siberia were not the singular victims of an exploitative state, but were often reduced to sexual objects to be vilified or protected by predatory men. Previous studies have incorrectly relegated women as primarily sexual beings used for growing the local populace and expanding a much-needed labor force for settlement and defense of the frontier. It was fundamental for the local government officials to resolve lawlessness, in the form of illicit sex and unwanted pregnancies, and thus provide a mechanism for frontier communities to live under the moral guidelines of church and state that recognized both men and women as individual juridical subjects.

The next two chapters will focus on the Russian Orthodox Church on the frontier. Chapter three will argue that the lives of Orthodox women in Siberia intersect with the propagation of Orthodox belief on the frontier. The implantation of Orthodoxy in the seventeenth century was initially an attempt to regulate Orthodox religious practice from above, but these efforts were transformed by forces from below in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment of Siberia. Convents and monasteries functioned to mark sanctioned religious spaces, but also adapted to local conditions and needs. Development of infrastructures in towns and villages, and population growth, and migration for European Russia contributed to the spread of Orthodox belief in the eighteenth century, but its practices varied among the sanctioned Orthodox, schismatic, sectarian, and newly baptized communities. Under these conditions ecclesiastical authorities often used spiritual missions, monastic imprisonment, and local inquisitors as instruments to regulate and institute Orthodox confessional practices in Siberia. Chapter four contends that church and state relations regarding expansion and legitimization were not always symbiotic, but often the church in lieu of the state was the engine of empire for territorial expansion in Siberia. In the seventeenth century the church in Siberia was the arbiter of

state authority for aggressive territorial expansion. The stories of Orthodox women in Siberia are enmeshed in the establishment of monastic institutions and the monastic lands needed to support them. The stories of Orthodox women in Siberia reveal that the Russian Orthodox Church was not only the moral legitimizer of empire, but the driving force of imperial expansion in Siberia. The last three chapters will show how Orthodox women's lives directly intersected on the frontier in multiple and contrasting ways. Monastic institutions expose how individual women functioned as agents of empire. Yet not all women in convents, towns and villages were empowered with roles of authority; some were targets or victims of imperial policies. In chapter five I demonstrate that women entered monastic life in Siberian convents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a way to adapt to an uncertain frontier where conditions in towns and villages were socially in flux, economically unstable, and politically volatile. Furthermore, women's entry into religious life as an institutional vocation was a persistent feature of female monasticism during periods of social change of modernization, reform, and imperial expansion from the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries. Convents on the frontier were not primarily elite institutions for inconvenient wives or particularly pious women. Monastic life demanded labor, but also imparted a status of religious vocation, and state service as agents of empire in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment. Chapter six will examine female monastic experience at Dalmatov Convent through a demographic study of a particularly important institution in the Tobol'sk Eparchy located on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains. The convent was equally shaped by its social, economic and political circumstances, in which women were positioned to function as moral exemplars of Orthodoxy, monastic jailors, and as administrators of monastic estates. The convent at Dalmatov was a distinctive monastic estate with a majority female monastic population that managed large tracts of land in Western Siberia.

Chapter seven delves deeper inside the role of nuns on the Siberian frontier to examine monastic imprisonment of women in the eighteenth century. These prisoners, who came from both Siberia and European Russia—and sometimes from the highest ranks of society--were convicted of religious and/or political opposition. Dalmatov and other convents on the Siberian frontier complicate the representation, role, and function of female monastic communities by showing that these women were also leveraged and empowered to control imperial spaces and bodies, rather than only manifesting religious devotion to others, or seeking their own spiritual improvement through a private contemplative life.

The concluding chapter affirms that gender is a useful category for historical analysis in the setting of the Russian empire in the premodern period. Not only were women's lives on the Siberian frontier different than men's, but in searching out their experiences we learn about the inner workings of empire. Searching out the stories of women on the frontier exposes the evolving nature of the frontier that was conflicted with the competing needs of settlement and security, and identifies the practice of ecclesiastical imperialism. The Russian Orthodox Church emerged as the arbiter of territorial expansion that claimed moral authority on the frontier with the implantation of Orthodoxy. Ultimately, Russia was not only a multinational, and multiconfessional empire, but the frontier was also a gendered space where women's performance was assessed and regulated, but essential as imperial subjects, and as agents of socio-economic and cultural change in an expanding empire.

CHAPTER 1 - WOMEN OF SIBERIA

This chapter will provide a general context for women in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries outside of monastic spaces. A survey of women as landholders, merchants, wives and female family members of military governors and other officials, and newly baptized women who converted to Orthodox Christianity will present a textured backdrop of the social, political, and economic place of women on the Siberian frontier. It must be acknowledged that women's places remained in the background on the landscape of androcentric histories. The accounts of women in Siberia is explicitly intertwined within the history of men, yet imperial expansion and "conquest" has been relegated to a predominantly male activity of subjugation. In the process of foregrounding women on the Siberian frontier, the accounts below will encompass the activities of both women and men in the process of expansion, settlement, and in the spread of Orthodoxy in Siberia.

Orthodox women were an integral part of establishing Russian economic, political and social rule in Siberia. They consciously and reflexively adapted to, and participated in transmitting, Orthodox cultural forms, political-economic arrangements, and social classifications and structures. The business of rule was placed in the hand of military governors and ecclesiastical officials, and they have been recognized as the arbiters of church and state authority on Siberian frontier. Unlike men, women have not been acknowledged or recognized for the indelible part they played in establishing methods of land ownership and taxation, arbitrary judicial administration, and in the economic exploitation of settler and indigenous population for their own personal gain, and as participants in a system of exile and punishment of prisoners. Laywomen were also agents of ecclesiastical imperialism that sought to impose moral rectitude not only on indigenous peoples, but ordered and classified its Orthodox followers

as upholders and transgressors of God's laws. Both women and men existed in circumstances of social disorder created by want of stable supply of resources and human capital. But within this system both women and men were able to negotiate the imposition of bureaucratic authority of the church and state that would punish and correct errant behavior. The accounts of women should not be considered harrowing or noble because they were mere women on a rough frontier, but must be recognized as significant for the fact that women participated in the messy business of empire.

On the Siberian frontier women were continuous, but unrecognized sources of economic, political and cultural stability. Willard Sunderland's study of the colonization of southern steppe lands has shown that the growth of the Russian empire hinged upon establishing local socio-economic structures that mirrored agricultural communities of central Russian lands, both real and imagined.⁵⁶ But families in Siberia were not only agriculturalists from large peasant households. The limited agricultural viability of Siberia forced the adaption of other communal and economic models. The collection of fur tribute, handicrafts, mining, transportation, and trade were also essential. As a result, local customs and practices integrated and depended on women, and thus determined the composition of Russian settler communities. Women became agents not only of economic development, but also of acculturation and overt authority as Russia embarked upon an ambitious plan of empire building in Eurasia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Female Property Owners in Siberia

⁵⁶ Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1-4.

In central Russia, as well as more distant lands on the Siberian frontier, women of varying social classes successfully owned or controlled large and small estates. Russian women had always had the legal right to own property in their own names, regardless of marital status. However, land often belonged not to individuals but to families.⁵⁷ The legal right of women to receive or inherit state-owned service lands, and a wife's control of martial property before and after the death of her husband is a phenomenon in Russia that remained stable from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries because of the close link between land ownership and military service.⁵⁸ Lands awarded for military service were not subject to patrilineal clan rights, and thus women had legal claims to service lands awarded to male family members. Although women's property rights in Russia regarding hereditary lands (*votchina*) were curtailed in the sixteenth century under Ivan IV, the heritable rights of women to service lands were bolstered and expanded in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Unlike their female counterparts in North America and Europe, women did have property rights to service lands, purchased hereditary lands, and their own dowries, in land or moveable property brought with them into the marriage.⁵⁹ Extant sources compiled between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries reveal that only a small percentage of women, widows and unmarried daughters, were granted full title to their husband's or father's estate, and most received only a portion of service land as a life estate,

⁵⁷ Eve Levin, "Women and Property in Medieval Novgorod: Dependence and Independence," *Russian History* 10 (1983), pp. 154-169.

⁵⁸ George G. Weickhardt, "Legal Rights of Women in Russia, 1100-1750." *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1, (1996): 1-23.

⁵⁹ Weickhardt's analysis is limited to law codes (in published versions) and not the documents of case law. For a source on how this worked on the ground, see Valerie Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces: The Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

or *prozhitok*.⁶⁰ This maintenance allotment was to be transferred to the eldest son when he came of age at fifteen years old with the legal and moral requirement that he would provide for his mother. If the widow was childless, had no sons, or her son refused to take care of her, she was allowed to maintain possession of the estate until her death.

In 1714, under the land reform of Peter I, the distinction between hereditary lands (*pomest'ia*), and service lands (*votchina*) was eliminated. This change increased the possibility for women to take over land rights of a deceased husband instead of relying on a father who might assign part of his estate to a daughter. Peter's law of Single Inheritance, issued in the same year, restricted the bequest of the father's land to a single heir. Usually—but not by law—that heir was a son, leaving other sons and daughters with limited claims to paternal property. This law engendered such resentment on the part of the propertied social orders evaded the decree, which was suspended soon after Peter's death.⁶¹ Yet, even prior to Peter's decrees, women in Siberia fared better in their land rights. All land in Siberia was considered to be “state” land granted for service, and widows customarily took over rights and responsibilities of landholding to be passed on to sons, but sometimes daughters. Much like the situation on the Kama and Volga regions following the conquest of Kazan in 1552, service lands in western Siberia were granted to state and military servitors in areas where Russian peasant settlement was established. Meanwhile, the state granted to monasteries other lands, where indigenous populations pursued a

⁶⁰ Weickhardt, “Legal Rights of Women,” 8. Under the 1649 Law Code (U 16:8, 16:11) widows and unmarried daughters received separate allotments of land for maintenance; the unmarried daughter(s) typically receiving half of the amount of the widowed wife – i.e., the widow 1/10th and the unmarried daughters 1/20th (U 16:32).

⁶¹ Michelle Lemarche Marrese, *A Noblewoman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700-1861*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Valerie Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces: The Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

mixed pastoral-agrarian economy supplemented with fishing, and hunting.⁶² Monasteries also rented out their lands to “free” peasants with no service obligations, mostly made up of so-called *guliashskie ludi*—that is, persons who were “wanderers,” not legally bound to a specific residence. On these monastery-owned lands, widows or women with absent husbands were obligated to provide labor and pay rents to the monastery.

Monasteries also received donations of land from pious individuals and families. These donations testify to the extent of female landed property ownership, and to their legal right to transfer deeds to convents and monasteries. Data on property bequests in European Russia show that service and hereditary land were most often willed to monasteries and convents, followed by widows, sons and then daughters as beneficiaries of land.⁶³ Monastic *votchina* was made up of donated lands, those granted by the tsar, and adjacent land it sometimes purchased or simply seized.⁶⁴ In the absence of full surveys of monastic landholdings in Siberia in this period, it is difficult to determine how much of their property monasteries acquired from lay people’s—including lay women’s—donations. Extant fragmentary evidence suggests that donations increased from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century with the growth of private landholding in Siberia in general

Admittedly, with limited extant sources it is impossible to know to what extent female family members received lands in Siberia, but it is reasonable to infer that women did hold and manage the properties originally granted to their male relatives. Cossack military servitors with their families constituted the majority of the groups originally dispatched to Siberian outposts to

⁶² Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire*, 153-154.

⁶⁴ Shorokhov, 40.

defend the frontier. The women who accompanied their menfolk stood to inherit service lands, thus contributing to Russian occupation and settlement on the Siberian frontier.

Records from the early seventeenth century Siberia demonstrate that women either owned or controlled land. The 1623 Tobol'sk District Land Inventory, or *Dozornaia Kniga*, lists six widows from a variety of social ranks as tax-paying landholders in villages on the upper and lower Irtysh River, and areas along the Tobol River.⁶⁵ These villages and homesteads supported the local and regional economy by plowing and planting fields, growing hay, grazing livestock, collecting timber, and catching fishing from nearby rivers and streams. The sections of land possession were a mix of plowed fields and meadow lands. Plowed fields for grain production were listed for by *chet'* or *chetverti*, that is a "quarter," which was approximately an acre, or by *desiatin*, which was approximately a hectare. Hayfields were also used as a measurement of land, which were calculated by the by the number of haystacks gathered, or *kopna*.⁶⁶ In European Russia, 10 haystacks on average were gathered on 1 *desiatin* of land, which was likely a similar to Siberia.

Hay as livestock fodder was an essential resource in the Tobol'sk district, as it was in nearly all part of Russia – it was the fuel of land transportation for trade and commerce, and indispensable for the movement of military troops that often depended upon horses and pack animals to travel overland, and long distances. Fodder was also an integral part of the agricultural development of Siberian lands, as two or three horses were necessary to pull the

⁶⁵ "1623 g. — Dozornaia kniga dereven' i pashen i pokosov i vsiakikh ugodii po Tobol'skomu uezdu," RGADA, F. 214, kn.3, l. 76-174ob. Accessed online February 2, 2019 at <http://forum.vgd.ru/16/91938/>

⁶⁶ V. I. Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikoruskago iazyka*, vol. I-O, (St. Petersburg; Moscow: Tip. M. O. Vol'fa, 1881), 158; Irina Germogenova, "Naimenovaniia mer dliny, vesa, mekha i deneg v dokumentakh iasachnogo sbora XII v.". *Idil* 2.9 (2013): 44-52.

large wooden plows. In western Siberia the grain crops were most often winter crops of wheat, spelt, rye, which could barely ripen in the short growing season. In the garden plot in “living quarters,” cabbage and root vegetables were often cultivated.

According to a register from Tobol'sk in 1623, along the Irtysh there were some 39 villages and 44 households working nearly 980 acres of land, whose population was made up of servicemen from Lithuania, mounted and foot Cossacks, newly baptized Christians, and 42 municipal *streltsy* soldiers, as well as a retired Cossack and the Lithuanian widow.⁶⁷ Their annual hay payment to the state consisted of 88,600 stacks.⁶⁸

Near Abalak on the upper Irtysh River in 1623, in the village of Iarkov, the widow Fedulika Iarkovskaia lived on a “quarter” (*chetvert'*) or a little over an acre of land where her house overlooked six “quarters,” or nearly eight acres of tilled land between her yard and the oak forest.⁶⁹ The southern strip of the field was burnt and laid fallow, but the nine *desiatins* (about a hectare) or just over 22 acres of meadow lands in the oak forest was in harvest, and that year she was able to gather 50 stacks of mown hay, which stood in the ravine, piled with vertical sides and a rounded tops.⁷⁰ The widow Fedulika along with her neighboring quitrent peasants Vaska Iarkov and his brothers Mikhailka and Afonka, as well as the newly arrived peasant Pavlik

⁶⁷ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 141.

⁶⁸ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 141.

⁶⁹ A *chetvert'* or *chet'* in the old Russian system of measures was an area of arable land, which divided the plowed area into “quarters” for purpose of taxation. *Sokha* was used as unit of taxation for worked land owned by someone else or the State. A *sokha* was divided into quarters. A *chetvert'* is equal to two *desiatins* (an area of land approximately equal to one hectare or 2.47 acres). Quarters of land that were planted for personal use were free from payment/taxation and were known as “living quarters” or *zhivshchim chert'*. The following information is based upon agrarian practices in the Kama and Volga (Povolzh'e) regions in the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century from archival records compiled by G. Peretiatkovich, *Povolzh'e: Ocherki iz istorii kraia i ego kolonizatsii*. 2 Vols., (Moscow, 1877-1882).

⁷⁰ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 100.

Zhernokov and his son Zhanko helped to bring in her harvest of hay. In addition, Vaska Iarov's had 300 stacks and Pavlik Zhernokov 30 stacks in reserve from the previous year (1622).

Fedulika and the men paid their taxes in kind, that is hay, to the state treasury in Tobol'sk, and received their allotment of grain in return.⁷¹ The widow's right to the lands she inherited, and the obligation to cultivate and harvest her holdings, was not only recognized by government officials in Tobol'sk, but also by her neighbors.

In 1623, on the lower half of the Irtysh River near the headwaters of the Kugaev River the widow of a Lithuanian prisoner of war turned serviceman, Pelageitsa Iagulovaskaia, controlled lands that contributed 300 stacks. On the upper Irtysh, located only two kilometers directly across from the town of Tobol'sk, the widow Nastasitsa Shagina lived near the village of Suzgun on eight "quarters" of farmland. Since one-third of these land lay fallow and she lived on one "quarter" of the land, she was obligated to pay taxes in kind only for a small portion of her holdings.⁷²

The Tobol'sk land register also makes note of townspeople who were allotted farming and grazing land along the Irtysh River, which included eleven villages with fourteen homesteads that covered over 126 "quarters," or 150 acres of farmland, and 89 *desiatins*, or 220 acres, of wooded meadowlands that produced some four thousand stacks of hay in 1623.⁷³ Okulinka, the widow of townsman Pervushka Ereemev, held six "quarters" of land and oversaw the harvest of 100 stacks of hay.⁷⁴ It is likely that Okulina maintained a house in Tobol'sk or

⁷¹ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 115.

⁷² 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 153.

⁷³ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 143ob.

⁷⁴ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 143ob.

possibly within the Abalak fortified settlement, but she was responsible for ensuring the tilling and harvest of the lands she inherited from her husband.

In the village of Trezvonov near the Abalak forest on the river Iliak, the widow, Kapelitsa Nevvtaevskaia along with her two sons Vavilko and Ondrushka worked fifteen “quarters,” or eighteen acres of farmland; 31 *desiatins*, or 76 acres, of wooden meadowlands; and six *desiatins*, or nearly 15 acres, of grazing lands.⁷⁵ In the same village, another widowed peasant woman by the name of Fetinitsa Povarnitsina along with her sons, 17 year-old Ivashko and 13 year-old Grishka, maintained a *desiatin*, or approximately two and a half acres, of farmland on the large landed estate of clerk (*podiachii*) Ilia Vlas’ev that was made up of over 133 *desiatins*, or nearly 330 acres of land.⁷⁶ In both instances, even though the widows’ sons were mentioned in the land register, these women were listed as the landholders responsible for the holdings, production, and taxes levied on the assigned lands.

Fleeting references to other women appear in the 1623 land register, most often as the nameless wives of peasants working small tracts of land, or unspecified wives and children of large Cossack families who were granted service estates. Even the few records of women holding or responsible for state and service lands are significant markers of other roles women played in the expansion and settlement of Siberia.

Where men were envisioned to be the primary beneficiaries of land and income based on military service, the role of women became crucial for the continued maintenance of state lands in the expansion of Siberia. Individual circumstances did not always lead to women overseeing inherited estates, but in situations where the family remained together after the death of a

⁷⁵ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 100.

⁷⁶ 1623 Dozornaia kniga, l. 127.

husband the widow by law could be willed the property, to continue to manage estate affairs, and to appoint an heir. However, she did not have clear title to the property, because she was liable to her children if the estate was ruined.⁷⁷ This appears to be the set of circumstances in a legal dispute over a widow's inheritance in the Siberian town of Tomsk.

Near the end of the seventeenth century Terentii Seredinin, a cavalry Cossack (*konnyi kazak*) who served the Tomsk military governor, died and his wife Domna inherited all of his lands and possessions. After several years of overseeing the operation of two grain mills, fishing grounds, fishing rights, all agricultural assets, along with a house in Tomsk and its servants, Domna found herself in a legal dispute with her brother-in-law concerning the future inheritance of the estate.⁷⁸ Domna was protecting not only her own claims to the property, but also her son's; she, not the boy's uncle, had the legal obligation to preserve his interest in his father's estate. In 1703, the Tomsk military governor's office upheld the widow's legal right to the entire estate so that her young son could inherit the lands. This case illustrates that Domna was efficiently managing the properties under her control and paying taxes. She had economic, political and social standing in the Tomsk community, and ultimately the military governor and his court found no reason to grant her brother-in-law control of properties she had rightfully inherited and was successfully overseeing.

Wives of Military Governors

The idea that wives and children of ruling officials could only be introduced once the frontier was tamed is a notion based in later Western, nineteenth-century concepts of frontier life

⁷⁷ Weickhardt, "Legal Rights of Women," 5-6.

⁷⁸ Liutsidarskaia, "Zhenshchiny v XVII veka," 12. See also A. A. Liutsidarskaia, *Storozhily Sibiri. Istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki*, (Novosibirsk: "Nauka" Sibirskoe Otdelenie, 1992), 107.

that has been superimposed upon the historical reality of Siberian settlement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even when unmarried military governors were dispatched from Moscow, they were often accompanied by other family members to include sisters, daughters, and nieces who relied upon material support the state provided to middle and low-ranking frontier officials. Families left small family estates in European Russia and were dispatched to provincial and frontier towns in service of the state. In exchange these female family members, sometimes with the assistance of servants, established and ran households, administering to the physical, material and social needs of their husbands, fathers, uncles and brothers. Their roles often exceeded domestic duties, as women wielded formal and informal power in creating and maintaining the social institutions necessary for permanent settlement in contested lands.

Besides landholding subjects, women in Siberia also served as agents of empire in other forms, namely as wives of military governors who accompanied their husbands and participated in the governing of towns and outposts. Often, family members and servants accompanied the new officials to their posts in Siberia. Nearly every three years new military governors were dispatched to Siberian outposts to replace the incumbent officials. Time restrictions were instituted from the imperial center for reasons of hardship, but more often to combat the tendency of corrupt military governor to grow personal fiefdoms. As newcomers, the military governors especially depended upon the assistance of their household members to manage their responsibilities in an unfamiliar setting.

Local military governors often became involved in domestic affairs of the family and clerical indiscretions, an area normally under church jurisdiction, when the distance of ecclesiastic officials prevented timely imposition of order and discipline. When these matters concerned women, the women of the governor's household stepped in. Thus, the need to

establish regularized rule in the vast spaces of Siberia included women of standing and authority. The public authority of military governor's wives on the frontier is an exception to the gendered dynamic of secular rule, and their influence in daily life, and within their respective communities should not be underestimated.

Russian state and church authorities understood the value of women and families in securing the frontier. So did the peoples who opposed to Russian expansion in southern and eastern territories. We only have to look to the practices of raiding on the steppe frontier, in which women and children were regularly taken captive. Their captors enslaved them, treating them as a commodity that could impoverish, destabilize and break the establishment Russian settlements in Siberia. Furthermore, the all sides in political, economic and territorial disputes in Siberia as well as most of the early modern world engaged in hostage taking, in which one side deprived another of their kin—primarily women and minor children—in order to coerce their behavior. Thus, the value ascribed to non-male family members in the establishment of empire was significant, and worthy of attention. Two specific cases illustrate the roles that women assumed as part of the duties in governing Siberian towns and settlements.

The wife of the military governor of Mangazei, Maria Semenovna, exercised huge power over her husband. This influence was so great that it was attributed to witchcraft. A local priest said of Maria Semenovna: “what she wants, is what is done, she even has a say in hangings.”⁷⁹ Tradespeople, service members, and others turned to the military governor's wife “in their last hours” in the hope of intercession, “and [those] in the town hall jail did not think of not going to beg of Grigorii's wife.”⁸⁰ Under the windows of Maria Semenovna dramatic scenes played out

⁷⁹ Liutsidarskaia, *Storozhily Sibiri*, 107.

⁸⁰ Liutsidarskaia, *Storozhily Sibiri*, 107.

with cries of petitioners. Here the military governor's wife beat with the knout women she judged to be guilty. Maria had her own office, like her husband's, where strict routines were observed.⁸¹

In another case, in Irkutsk, the wife of the military governor played a different, but no less significant, role. In 1694 Afanasii Saveliev arrived as the new military governor (*voevoda*) of the southeastern Siberian town of Irkutsk. Within a year, his merciless behavior toward the settlers and local population resulted in a series of violent uprisings among local Buriat settlements. After the petitions from the servicemen of Irkutsk reached Moscow, the town waited nearly a year for Saveliev's replacement to arrive in Irkutsk. Soon the new military governor, Semen Timofeich Poltev, along with his wife and young child were dispatched. However, during the arduous journey Semen Poltev made it as far as the Udinsk fortress on the Angara River, where he died of an unspecified illness. His wife and child had little choice but to continue on, and managed to reach Irkutsk in 1696.

The body of Semen Poltev was brought to Irkutsk with his wife and young son Nikolai. Upon their arrival, the Cossack leaders elected Poltev's young son to become the new military governor and manage the affairs of the embroiled border town.⁸² Although relations between Saveliev and the Cossack group of Irkutsk had been confrontational, they understood the need to install a new representative from Moscow. The Cossacks elected their man the military

⁸¹ Liutsidarskaia, *Storozhily Sibiri*, 108.

⁸² A. K. Chernigov, *Irkutskie povestvovaniia: 1661-1917 gody*, v 2 t., Irkutsk: "Ottisk," 2003. http://irkipedia.ru/content/irkutskie_voevody accessed online October 22, 2017; A. P. Barsukov, *Spiski gorodovykh voevody i drugikh voevodskogo upravleniia Moskovskogo gosudarstva XVII stoletii: po pechatannym pravitel'stvennym aktam*, (Moscow: Kuchkovo pole, 2010), 103; *Trudy vostochnosibirskogo Otdela Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo. No. 6 Irkutskaia Letopis'*, vyp. 1. 1652-1856, (Letopis' P. I. Pizhenskogo i V. A. Krotova, 1911), 7-8. <https://www.prilib.ru/item/375908> accessed online November 1, 2017.

serviceman (*syn boiarskii*) Ivan Perfil'ev, as deputy (*prikazchik*), to act as the young boy's adviser. Perfil'ev was an eminent person in Irkutsk; his father was instrumental in founding the town. Ivan Perfil'ev himself was revered among the Barguzinsk Cossacks as a military leader who had quelled Buriat uprisings. He was also popular among Irkutsk townspeople for his ability to curb Cossack excesses.⁸³ Once these matters had been decided, a group of Cossacks set out to round up governor Saveliev and bring him to the governor's offices in Irkutsk. There, a group of Cossacks, Perfiliev, the new "boy governor" and his mother were waiting. The Cossacks proclaimed to Saveliev, "If you do not go with us honorably, we will take you dishonorably." Then they dragged him out of his house to hear the imperial degree deposing him from service. Next, young Nikolai Poltev was led by hand into the hall by "an uncle" to be formally named the governor of Irkutsk. The boy cried out to his mother that he did not want to join with Perfil'iev and the Cossacks, but no matter how much he refused, the boy was compelled to accept the command. Meanwhile, Saveliev vehemently disputed his loss control over the town. Ultimately, both Saveliev and young Nikolai grudgingly accepted the compulsory circumstances created by the Cossacks and followed the imperial order. They completed the change of command, and Nikolai Poltev and along with Ivan Perfiliev were placed in charge out of necessity.

Nikolai Poltev served as military governor, with Perfil'ev as his lieutenant and his mother as his unofficial guide, for two years. The chronicles make no mention of his age or his tenure as the military governor of Irkutsk other than the incident of the young boy's crying while taking the oath of appointment. Local community leaders as well as Muscovite officials preferred his

⁸³ Christoph Witzenrath, *Cossacks and the Russian Empire, 1598-1725: Manipulation, Rebellion and Expansion into Siberia*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 49.

appointment as military governor, under his mother's care and influence, to the continuation of unrest and the oppression of Afanasi Savelov. In 1699, Nikolai and his mother returned to Moscow.⁸⁴

Following the mass public unrest of both Russian settlers and indigenous Buriats in 1696, the tenure of Nikolai Poltev from 1697 to 1699 brought some stability to the region of Transbaikalia. In Witzenrath's study of Cossack influence in the expansion of the Siberian frontier, much of the success of the Muscovite state is attributed to the institutional adoption of Cossack legal customs into Muscovite imperial culture, in other words how the demands and customs of the periphery influenced frontier policies generated from the center. Service men and Cossacks used innovative and practical approaches on the ground in frontier locations embraced the essential roles each community member could and did play in times of internal and external conflict. The two years of service as "minor" military governor in Irkutsk by Nikolai Poltsev and his mother demonstrate the significant role of women and children not only in building and expanding empire, but to the symbolic position women and children served in providing service and stability in contested borderlands of Siberia.

The placement of young Poltev as the military governor of Irkutsk nominally embraced the directives of the Siberian Prikaz and met the needs of the Irkutsk Cossacks. But the willingness of Semen Poltev's family to continue traveling east and remain in Siberia after his death was remarkable. Considering the circumstances with surrounding territories embroiled with unrest could have been the only expedient option, yet the choice to continue on to Irkutsk,

⁸⁴ *Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim, sobrannie i izdannie arkheograficheskoi komissiei*, tom. 10, No. 67, (St. Petersburg: Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi E. I. V. Kantseliarii, 1846-1872), 285-286.

facing an unknown destiny for a widow and her young son ultimately illustrates the fortitude, and value of women on the Siberian frontier.

This account also speaks to the expectations of the wives and families of a military governor, which were to endure adversity not only for the sake of the family but also for the establishment and growth of communities willing to accept the authority of the Russian state (when it benefited their own interests) in contested territories on the frontier. Based on numerous reports and petitions to the Siberian Prikaz, Imperial Muscovy was completely aware of the dangers to Cossack groups and their families who initially settled regions east of the Ural Mountains. As collectors of fur tribute (*iasak*) in Siberia, Cossack women and children faced raiding steppe nomads who captured or killed entire villages. Moscow understood the need to pacify Cossack concerns and accept their legal customs of elected elder in the process of governing the frontier. If the Cossacks embraced the boy Nikolai Polev and his mother as legitimate representatives of the tsar, then Moscow must do the same. In choosing to dispatch military and civilian administrators accompanied by their families the local officials, Russian authorities decided to fully integrate wives and children into useful roles.

Military governors were not always married as in the case of Colonel Nikita Miklashevskii, the acting governor of Tomsk whose marriage to the daughter of a fellow officer. The wives of military governors played significant enough roles that the rare bachelor men wanted to marry. However, women of appropriate rank were not so numerous, and so Colonel Nikita Miklashevskii, the acting governor of Tomsk in 1743, chose Ul'iana Zhidovina as his bride. Ul'iana was the daughter of a fellow officer, a major, but she was also Miklashevskii's cousin, which made the union incestuous. Miklashevskii prevailed upon the priest Merkur'ev to perform the wedding anyway. All of them got into trouble with the Church authorities when this

inconvenient fact became public. Ul'iana Zhidovina in 1743, came under scrutiny because the bride was a close relative.⁸⁵

Cossack Women

The story of Ivan Perfil'ev and his Cossacks presents them as an entirely male group. This is not entirely surprising, because previous studies have shown that Cossack groups rarely practiced marriage until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Cossacks preferred to remain unencumbered with families and instead living communally with men. This did not mean that they lived abstinently, however. They brought women to the *stanitsa* who they had captured from their enemies. Ivan IV had ordered Cossack *sichi* to marry, but it was not until the beginning of Peter I rule did these male communities begin to practice forms of secular marriage on the *maidan*.⁸⁶

Siberian Cossacks appear to follow similar practices. In 1621, when Archbishop Kiprian arrived in Siberia, he described town life as he found it:

...The Siberian Cossacks live in such a way - they travel to Moscow and other cities to proposition women and girls, and say they are married to these women, but bring them to Tobol'sk and sell them to the military governor, Germans, Tatars, and peasants to work (v rabotu) ...⁸⁷

The phrase “v rabotu” meant not just “for work” but also had a direct implication of slavery—“rab” being the Church Slavonic word for “slave” and “roba” being a common term for a slave

⁸⁵ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 109, *Delo o venchanii sviashchenikom Merkur'evym Tomskogo voevody polkovnika Miklashevskogo s maiorskoii docher'iu Ul'ianoi Zhidovinoi, sostoiashchei s nim v rodstve, 1743*.

⁸⁶ Shane O'Rourke, *Warrior and Peasants: The Don Cossacks in Late Imperial Russia*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 136.

⁸⁷ Viacheslav Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi: Bibgraffii arhipasteryi Tobol'skikh i Sibirskikh, 1620-1918*, (Ekaterinburg: “Uralskii rabochii,” 1998), 17.

woman in seventeenth-century Russian. Men's sexual use of their slave women was common, if immoral, in premodern Russia. So, taken together, Kiprian was expressing his concern about both the economic and sexual exploitation of women. Among Cossacks in Siberia, then, the difference between a wife, a concubine, so important in Russian communities of European Russia, was obscured.

Within this overall pattern, a variety of conditions existed for women based on hierarchical social systems within Siberian Cossack families and clans. In late seventeenth-century Tomsk there are numerous instances when elderly widows of Cossack leaders (*golova*) took monastic vows, and donated their common property or land holding to the convent where they took up residence. Thus, clearly some Cossack men married, although possibly their unions were non-monogamous. Even so, these marriages were sufficiently official for women to inherit property.

The Newly Baptized

The Russian annexation of Siberia resulted in the disruption of indigenous communities of Tatars and Siberian natives. Although the Russian church and state authorities rarely imposed conversion upon their involuntary subjects, they did allow them to adopt Christianity, and they sometimes even encouraged it. When Orthodox churches, convents and monasteries became a fixture in Siberia in the first half of the seventeenth century, the population of newly baptized Christians also grew. As discussed in the Introduction, conversion was not a formalized mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. However, to eliminate the practice of concubinage, Orthodox clerics wanted native women to convert to Christianity for purposes of marriage. Russian men, and even the indigenous women themselves, might seek conversion in order to enter into an officially-sanctioned marriage. Records of marriages and interactions between native

communities and Russians in Siberia are more numerous in the eighteenth century, and likely reflect similar conditions of the seventeenth century.

Once native women converted to Orthodoxy, they were under the same strictures on interactions outside of the Orthodox faith as for persons who were Orthodox since birth. Nonetheless, native women attempted to maintain contact with their families and community. In 1722, a new female convert from Islam to Orthodoxy entered into a marriage with a *iasachnyi* Tatar, likely due to the wishes of her family. This constituted a violation of canon law, which forbade Orthodox persons to marry non-Christians. She was arrested and held under guard at the Rozhdestvenskii Convent at Sofiskii Cathedral. But somehow, she escaped, and after a search of nearby yurt villages she was not found. Perhaps she had fled Tobol'sk with her Tatar husband.⁸⁸

Although typically intermarriages involved Russian men and indigenous women, another case featured Russian woman and a newly baptized Vogul man. In 1760, the Tobol'sk Consistory received word about the improper marriage in Tavdinsk (Tara) of 22-year-old Mikhei Bazarnov to 17-year-old Stefanida Svasheevskaia.⁸⁹ Three months passed before the priest in Tavdinsk reported the marriage. The Tobol'sk authorities approved the marriage, and recognized the couple as lawfully wed four months later. However, the priest was ordered to pay a fine of 40 kopeks, and a month later in February 1761, the Tobol'sk Consistory issued a letter defrocking the priest for not following procedure on officially registering the couple, and asking permission for their marriage. The priest's negligence was brought to the attention of Tobol'sk

⁸⁸ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d.1, *Delo o novokreshchennoi iz tatar Elfimii Grigor'evoi, kotoraiia vyshla zamyzh za tatarina*, 1722, ll.1-25.

⁸⁹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 2971, *Delo po donosheniiu Tavdinskogo zakazchika Alekseia Poliakova o sviashchennike Khristorozhdestvenskoi tserkvi Koshuiskoi volosti Nikite Afanas'eve obvenchavem novokreshchennogo vogula Mikheia Bazarnova c docher'iu prikazchika Stefanidoi Svasheevskoi bez benechnoi pamiati*, 1760, ll. 1-13.

authorities by a clerk from a town nearly 250 kilometers to the southeast. Since the young woman was the daughter of another clerk, it is difficult to know if the clerk was offended by the priest's consent to marry the couple, or his failure to register it, or both. Likely, the couple wanted their marriage to be recognized as lawful, even though it was irregular, and the priest was afraid that church officials would not approve. The priest may have been correct, but after three months the Tobol'sk consistory had little choice except to approve the union, which had already been consummated. But they wanted the priest punished so that their authority in validating marriages was upheld.

Native and Tatar men and women also chose to convert to Orthodoxy for reasons other than marriage. The majority of conversion cases recorded at the Tobol'sk Consistory concern the conversion of Tatar, Bukharan and Persian men with unspecified reasons. In several cases the wives of the newly baptized Christians left them for other men, indicating that these women made their own choices to remain loyal to their own religious traditions.⁹⁰ A Tatar woman from the Bratsk fortress was sent with her husband and four children to Tobol'sk in 1748, while imprisoned her husband *iaschnye* Ralov Burmakin refused to convert to Orthodoxy. Burmakin's wife converted so that she and her children could be released. They were baptized, given new names, and placed under the supervision of an archpriest Rusamovich at the Tobol'sk Uspenskii church. The priest was obligated to regularly report on their confessional status, indicating an awareness on the part of ecclesiastical authorities that their conversion was less than voluntary. Rusamovich informed his superiors that the woman and children were learning to pray. He coupled with report with a request for funds from the episcopal treasury to purchase

⁹⁰ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 72, *Delo o turinskom novokreshchennom tatarine Vasilii Puksheneve*, 1743, ll. 1-3; f. I156, op. 1, d. 341, *Delo o novokreshchennykh iz raznykh religii*, 1748, l. 3, 8.

the woman a new dress (*sarafan*) since she had no husband to provide for her. In 1750, the same priest reported that the family continued to profess the Orthodox faith.⁹¹ The reporting requirements following conversion was instituted in 1721 as part of Peter I's *Spiritual Regulation*, intended to prevent backsliding among new converts to Orthodoxy.

Female Criminality

The stereotype of Russian settlement in Siberia emphasizes involuntary migration. Certainly, in some known cases, Russian authorities compelled the migrants. The penalty for certain types of crimes involved exile, and both men and women could be sentenced to it. Typically, the condemned convicts' families were ordered to accompany them. Furthermore, masters could compel their dependents, whether serfs, slaves, or servants, to move to other sites. Soldiers could be deployed to remote locations upon orders from Moscow, and church hierarchs could direct clergy to take up duties elsewhere. In those circumstances, the line between voluntary and involuntary migration became hazy.

A large part of the Russian population that migrated to Siberia initially never sought to put down roots. Cossacks, *promyshlenniki* (fur trappers and traders), and business people intended to work there and then return to homes in European Russia. Those plans often changed as the economic, social, and political opportunities developed in Siberia.

Serfdom per se was absent in the settlement of Siberia, as the newly conquered lands belonged to the state to distribute to its clients, not to private families. Under the Law Code of 1649, landowners could send unruly serfs, beggars, and criminals -- including those found

⁹¹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 341, *Delo o novokreshchennykh iz raznykh religii*, 1748, ll. 44-46.

counterfeiting currency, and practicing witchcraft -- to Siberia, and receive a tax credit.⁹²

Empress Elizabeth's decree in 1760 allowed the nobility to expel their serfs, troublesome or not, to Siberia in lieu of providing their quota of army recruits. The conveyance of entire peasant households, including wives and children, meant additional cash payments to landlords from the state.⁹³ Schismatics opposing Nikonian church reforms were also sent to the hinterlands by church and state officials beginning in the seventeenth century. War captives, mostly Swedes, Poles, Germans, or Lithuanians (often grouped under the designation "Litva") were also dispatched by the thousands to Siberia with their families following seventeenth and eighteenth conflicts with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Sweden.⁹⁴

Moving undesirables great distances away from the capital served a two-fold purpose of the Russian state. First, the state rid itself of troublemakers in its core areas. Second, the settlers populated and developed the lands on the peripheries, thus providing a footprint for Russian rule. The frontier was also a proving ground. Expedient socio-economic practices of removal and resettlement advanced on the Siberian frontier in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were similarly used during the nineteenth century to cleanse Russian Orthodoxy of heresies and religious dissenters of the Dukhobors, Molokans, and Subbotniks, and to populate the newly annexed lands in the Caucasus.⁹⁵

In 1621, at least ten priests with their families were voluntarily resettled to Tobol'sk from Vologda and Ustiug, and in 1627 another 500 peasant households were sent from the same

⁹² Richard Hellie, "Early Modern Russian Law: The Ulozhenie of 1649," *Russian History* 15, no. 2/4 (1988): 155-79.

⁹³ W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 164.

⁹⁴ Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590-1822*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 66.

⁹⁵ Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

region, including Sol'vychevodsk. It is unknown whether the 1637 resettlement was voluntary or not, but included in their number were 150 unmarried women to become wives of Cossack and other men in Tobol'sk.⁹⁶ Often it is this particular instance of the carting of brides to the wilds of Siberia, which has received so much attention by historians, and has led to the erroneous conclusion that women were sent to Siberia as sexual slaves, and "biological engines driving Siberian colonization."⁹⁷ The reality was quite different. These women were part of entire communities that were directed to settle in recently established communities in and around Tobol'sk, and they were not singled out specifically due to their marital status. Historians in later centuries expressed concern for the sexual exploitation of Russian women sent to Siberia, and were also aware of petitions sent from church and civil authorities on the frontier for Orthodox wives from European Russia. However, nineteenth-century Russian historians had ideological reasons to conflate the desire for wives with forced migration; they wished to depict women as victims in order to critique the colonial practices of the Russian state. N. M. Iadrintsev, a late nineteenth-century ethnologist, was one of the primary critics of Russian colonization of Siberia. However, his critique was not aimed at colonialism itself, but rather he wanted to suggest how the process of Russian settlement could have been more efficient, gradual and civilized.⁹⁸

Women convicted of crimes, like men, could be sentenced to Siberian exile. As historian Robin Bisha has documented, non-elite women brought to police stations in St. Petersburg for

⁹⁶ *Tobol'skie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, No. 9-10 (Tobol'sk: 1887), 170.

⁹⁷ Andrew A. Gentes, "'Licentious Girls' and Frontier Domesticators: Women and Siberian Exile from the 16th to the Early 19th centuries," *Sibirica*, 2003, 3(1): 5-6; Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 67; I. V. Shcheglov, *Khronologicheskii perechen' vazhneishikh dannikh iz istorii Sibiri: 1032–1882 gg.* (1883; rpt. Surgut: Severnyi dom, 1993), 46, 70.

⁹⁸ N. M. Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1882), 120-125.

“indecent behavior” (prostitution or illicit sex) were exiled to Siberia as a means of regulating their sexual conduct.⁹⁹ Punishment was removal from European Russia and marriage to exiled men or other settlers in Orenburg or Siberian territories. So, women that were sent to Siberia for the specific purpose to serve as brides were not exploited by the frontier, rather their exploits were managed by authorities that recognized the aberrant sexual behavior could be regulated and transformed on the frontier. Widows, wives of absent soldiers and sailors, and unmarried women that traded in sex could have a measure of economic and social security in domestic life, which served the needs of the state in establishing settled communities on the frontier. In other words, frontier spaces were imagined to serve various purposes – to improve the status of disreputable women as a nascent means of social welfare, while simultaneously relocating undesirable elements from “civilized” society. The frontier held the potential to either erase and absorb the degenerate or regenerate and transform individual lives, and the state hoped for the latter. Often contemporary analysis of women on the Siberian frontier has produced a one-dimensional distorted image of the frontier and of women, while church and state authorities on the frontier in past centuries understood that women and the frontier could be leveraged for multiple purposes.

Crimes Against Women

Violence and abuse of native and Orthodox women from nearly every social class were prevalent on the Siberian frontier. Whether crimes against women occurred more often in Siberia than in other parts of Russia cannot be determined, since few statistics exist for comparison. The regulation of the family fell under the authority of the church, except for cases of rape and murder, which falls under the jurisdiction of civil authorities. Church authorities issued

⁹⁹ *Russian Women, 1698-1917 Experience and Expression*, ed. Robin Bisha, et. al, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 122-124.

judgements on spousal abuse, harming newborns, illegitimate children, and sexual crimes of fornication, bestiality, and incest. If members of the clergy were involved in any of the above charges, church hierarchs were informed. Clergy charged with murder remained under the authority of civil officials, whereas charges of rape were often referred to the church, although that did not preclude the offender facing civil charges and punishments also.

The case of Aleksei Silin, illustrates that indigenous women had the right to testify in court, and the role of the church in legal matters.¹⁰⁰ Silin was a priest at the Bogoiavlenskii church in the Surgut district, and he had raped an Ostyak woman in 1745. The charges against him were originally brought before the military governor's office in Surgut, and then sent to Tobol'sk metropolitan Antonii's jurisdiction. It seems that at first the military governor's office did not know Silin was a priest, but when they discovered this, they sent the case to Tobol'sk. A lengthy investigation ensued in 1745 and 1746, producing a long record of depositions from the questioning of Katerina, the Ostyak woman, her husband, and witnesses in the Ostyak community. The majority of testimony confirmed that Katerina was in fact raped by the priest. The secular officials verified the charges, as demonstrated by their decision to send the case to the Tobol'sk metropolitan, who had jurisdiction over the crimes of churchmen.

CONCLUSIONS

The presence of women in Siberia from all ranks and social classes was necessary not merely to people the periphery, but to solidify a nascent civil society. If Muscovy was to establish a hold on the populations and resources of Siberia, entire families would have to become integrated in frontier and border towns. More migrant Russian women took up residence

¹⁰⁰ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 282, (1747) *Delo o bludnom nasili sviashchenika Surgutskogo yezda Silina Ostiatskoi zhenki Kateriny*, 1747, ll. 1-27.

in Siberia during later centuries, as did men, yet the foundation for establishing Russian rule in Siberia from the seventeenth century onward was dependent on the permanent presence of women and families. The eighteenth century demographic records of the Russian empire reveal included women in the *reviskie skazi* or census revision data beginning in 1763.¹⁰¹ In an effort to fully understand and assess the realm she governed, Catherine II directed the Senate in the third census revision of 1763 the addition of non-tax paying populations not previously accounted for - female members of households, the coachmen and drivers the transported goods and service across the empire, and populations that fell under the oversight of the Orthodox Church – monastic and lay clergy, as well as monastic peasants.¹⁰² The notation of females reflected not merely the female population by a female sovereign, but an initial step towards accounting for both tax-paying and non-tax paying members of the empire. Taxes were not necessarily assessed to female members of the family, unless they functioned as the sole head of the household, but an accounting of their presence at all socio-economic levels gained growing importance to the Russian state. Women would not be counted as a separate statistical category until the sixth revision census in 1811,¹⁰³ but the Russian empire's desire to assess the fidelity, economic viability, social status, and mobility of not only men but also women began in the mid-eighteenth century.

The enumeration of Siberian populations in the eighteenth century did not account for indigenous, non-Orthodox populations, and was not full systematized until the second half of the

¹⁰¹ GATO (TOB), f. 1154, op. 8, *Tobol'skaia kazennaia palata, g. Tobol'sk, Tobol'skoi gubernii (1782-1919 gg.)*, The *revizskie skazki* of 1782 shows that female population were listed in Tobol'sk district records, but V. M. Kabuzan's according to Kabuzan's findings female members were to be listed beginning in 1763.

¹⁰² V. M. Kabuzan, *Narodonaselenie Rossii v XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX veka (po materialam revizii)*, (Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR: Moscow, 1963), 152.

¹⁰³ Kabuzan, 105.

nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ The administrative boundaries of the Russian empire in Siberia changed during ongoing territorial expansion throughout the eighteenth century, which then and now complicates full understanding of the scale of migration from European Russia and within Siberia. Some limited sources exist for a statistical analysis of the demography of Siberia in the eighteenth century, including the census records, G. F. Miller's "Geographical Description of All the Districts of Siberia, gathered from 1734 to 1743,"¹⁰⁵ and parish registers (*metricheskie knigi*), which recorded births, deaths, and marriages, but only after 1764.¹⁰⁶ It may be possible to trace not only residence but also movement from one place to another. However, this massive effort must await another project.

The vast majority of the ethnic Russian Siberian population came from the peasantry, sent voluntarily and involuntarily to lands east of the Urals. Yet, the Orthodox populations who migrated or were exiled from European Russia, and settled in Siberia made up a small proportion of the total population. The census or *revizskie skazki* of the eighteenth century provide statistics on known numbers of imperial subjects, but the population numbers generally did not include large groups semi-nomadic native peoples of Siberia. An enormous span of land, and low population density in Siberia provided space for European Russia when regions and especially agricultural zones were overpopulated.

¹⁰⁴ Kabuzan, 115-116.

¹⁰⁵ RGADA, f. 199, op. 2, p. 273, portfolio 1, d. 1, *G. F. Miller Portfolios*.

¹⁰⁶ Kabuzan, 95. Kabuzan's demographic analysis shows that the population numbers were compiled from the counties (*uezdy*) whose geographic boundaries had remained consistent from the sixteenth century to the 1775-85 provincial reforms.

CHAPTER 2 - SEXUAL REGULATION AND FEMALE AUTONOMY IN SIBERIA

This chapter challenges the ideas and assumptions of female autonomy in eighteenth-century Russia, specifically in the settlement populations of Western Siberia. It contends that women cannot be singularly considered victims of exploitation by either the state or their male counterparts, that they actually possessed a greater degree of sexual autonomy in eighteenth-century frontier environments. Although the church viewed women primarily as objects to reinforce and regulate family life based on the canons of the Russian Orthodox Church, they were individually held accountable for their sexual misconduct.¹⁰⁷ The Turinsk cases show that the secular law informally recognized women as autonomous sexual actors and not merely victims of male lust. In fact, the archival evidence shows that women were treated as conscious actors in the crime of fornication, and that individual autonomy was not only the preserve of men in eighteenth-century frontier settlement towns.

This interpretation challenges that advanced by historian Andrew Gentes. In his study of women exiles from 1593 through the early nineteenth century, he argued that the Russian state victimized and exploited them, regarding them as nothing more than vessels for reproductive purposes, and sexual objects of predatory men on the frontier. He argued, “the [Russian] state conceptualized females, whether Russian or native, as primarily reproductive organs or productive engines, within the national economic superstructure,” who would give “birth to a new generation of servitors and peasants.”¹⁰⁸ This arguably was the case throughout the

¹⁰⁷ Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900-1700*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 160-211.

¹⁰⁸ Gentes, “‘Licentious Girls’ and Frontier Domesticators,” 5.

nineteenth century, where a growing emphasis on reproductive capabilities existed in both Europe and Russia. Health concerns about the labor force and the related economic viability of the state resulted in increased emphasis on the part of the state on women as a reproductive force. In mid-eighteenth-century Russia this simply was not the case. Officials in Siberia were interested in women's illicit sex and pregnancies not because they were pursuing a natalist policy, which viewed women as reproductive engines, but rather as part of a larger attempt to maintain social stability. The state sought to control men's and women's extramarital sex equally. Contrary to the idea of growing a local populace that would expand and supply a much needed labor force for settlement and defense of the frontier, as Gentes' argument implies, local government officials found it essential to resolve lawlessness, in the form of illicit sex and unwanted pregnancies, and thus provide a mechanism for frontier communities to live under the moral guidelines of church and state. Furthermore, my study highlights that the local government became involved in matters of sexual transgressions outside its standard purview in order to sustain and reinforce secular law as the ultimate authority. Maintaining local authority on the frontier served imperial interests of stability and productivity, and simultaneously kept the local military governor in good standing with imperial officials through fulfilling his role as the lawful broker of social order, moral precepts, and peace between imperial subjects on the frontier. Once local inhabitants reported crimes of fornication (*blud* or *bludnoe vorovstvo*) to the local administrators, the office of the local military governor (*voevoda*) sought to assert secular law over church law to enhance and solidify their position as agents of empire.

The local officials under the authority of the Russian state explicitly interpreted laws concerning fornication to regulate the lives of women and men, while demonstrating its authority in matters of sexual propriety over the traditional role of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Historians recognize the erosion of church power and influence beginning in the mid-seventeenth century and its further secularization in the eighteenth century, when Peter the Great replaced the office of patriarch with a state-appointed committee, the Holy Synod in 1721.¹⁰⁹ However, less often historians note the influence of local officials that appropriated authority over church matters, particularly in regard to illicit sexual conduct. Seeking to discover why the regulation of intimate practices generated such notice of local officials in Turinsk, I will specifically focus on the charges of fornication brought by townspeople against one another, namely sexual crime (*bludnoe vorovstvo*), and sexual sin (*bludnoe grekh*) --a term reserved for ecclesiastical affairs. The bureaucrats of Turinsk concerned themselves in matters of illicit sex, which ordinarily fell under the domain of the church, as a manifestation of growing local and imperial anxieties about disorder and the need for social stability in the provinces. The act of fornication entered the secular public sphere because it challenged more than Christian ethics and the primacy of the husband in sexual contact; it represented a comprehensive destabilization of familial and imperial order. Local officials in Turinsk dealt quickly and decisively in these cases, not necessarily out of strong moral leaning, but rather for practical reasons of asserting their authority, which they deemed crucial for the security of the frontier.

Wives of Soldiers

¹⁰⁹ James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971); Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia, Eighth Edition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Marc Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change Through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600-1800*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); and P.N. Butskinskii, *Zaseleniē Sibiri i byt pervykh eia nasei'nikov. Izslidovanie*. (Khar'kov: Tip. Gubernskago pravleniia, 1889). Peter did not actually succeed in turning government of the Russian Orthodox Church into a department of state, although that was the plan in the Spiritual Regulation. At the first meeting of the "College of Religion," it reconstituted itself as the Synod and asserted that it was not a branch of government, but rather a body independent of the government, reporting directly to the tsar.

Wives of lower ranking soldiers (*soldatki*) were particularly vulnerable to dislocation, unlawful enslavement, and charges of sexual impropriety by the church and state. Wives were free from the authority of their original tax paying communities after husbands were conscripted, and they and their children now came under the control of the military. They were not permitted to live with husbands except in garrison conditions, which were uncomfortable and hazardous. However, they received passports and were free to travel to search for employment. As a result, soldiers' wives relocated to towns as owners of artisan workshops, or engaged in minor trade, or in prostitution, or in trafficking unwanted children from foundling homes.¹¹⁰ In all parts of Russia, and in the normative framework of Russian society, wives and children derived their social status from husbands and fathers. Under these conditions, combined with Petrine military reforms that instituted a large standing army in 1716, soldiers' wives and children found themselves in a unique position as free from state taxation and the authority of a landlord, but often excluded from membership in the local community. When a recruit was conscripted from towns, villages or monasteries the community counted the economic loss of not just one male laborer, but the entire family. Military authorities were supposed to assist soldiers' wives, but often wives and children relied upon the good will of the relatives or the church. Women in general could remarry after the death of a husband, but wives of soldiers had to legally prove they were deceased. Illegitimate births among soldiers' wives were also common during the absence of their husband, which further strained their ties to the community. When children were born to soldiers' wives, whether legitimate or not, they were registered as "soldier's children"

¹¹⁰ Wirtschafter, "Social Misfits," 229; David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 22.

(*soldatskie deti*), and fell under the legal-administrative status of the military.¹¹¹ The children of soldiers were also considered legally free from state service, yet male children were designated to enter the military at age 18, and daughters of soldiers could be forced to marry a peasant who was tied to a landlord, the state, or the church. Sons of low-ranking soldiers often disguised their identities to avoid military service, while daughters embraced their parentage to dispute their enserfment as legally free women.¹¹² The extraction of human resources in service to the state was many times at odds with establishing settled frontier.

As the result of Peter I's military reform, the army was regularized in all provinces, including Siberia, and became Russia's permanent, land-based military force. In Siberia, and throughout the Russian Empire, previous military servitors were not disbanded, but reformed into new regiments made up of Cossack and peasant populations.¹¹³ Before the first half of the eighteenth century, irregular forces of Cossacks, interspersed with "riflemen" or *streltsy* constituted the "professional" soldiers of Siberia, with foot soldiers or garrison troops from the peasantry. These peasant militia men, called *godoval'shchiki*, were supposed to be drafted for only a one-year term, but it was often extended into several years; when their annual term was up at one fortress, outpost, or defensive line, they were sent on to another.¹¹⁴ When military reforms reached Siberia in 1744 with the establishment of the Siberian Corps under Major-General Christians Kinderman, the demand for peasant recruits only increased. At the beginning of the eighteenth century 3,000 Cossacks and peasant militia were assigned to the Ishim,

¹¹¹ Wirschafter, "Soldiers' Children, 1719-1856: A Study of Social Engineering in Imperial Russia," *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte*, no. 30 (1982): 61-136.

¹¹² Wirschafter, "Social Misfits," 232.

¹¹³ V. D. Puzanov, "The Formation and Discharge Service of the Cossacks of Siberia in the XVIII century," *Bylye Gody*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2017): 1184-1193.

¹¹⁴ V. D. Puzanov, "Godoval'shchiki v Sibiri v XVII v.," *Voprosy istorii*, No. 2 (2009): 132-142.

Kuznetsk, and Kolyvan defensive lines on steppe borderlands. By 1751 General Kinderman had formed ten regiments of 1,000 men each – four for the eastern districts of Kuznetsk, Tomsk, Krasnoiarsk, and Eniseisk; and six for the western districts of Tobol'sk, Tuimen, Verkotur'e, Ialutorovsk, Krasnoslobodsk, and Ishim. In order to complete his plan and still defend to southern borders of Siberia, Kinderman proposed and received authority to enlist 15,000 Cossacks, state peasants, newly baptized Siberian natives (*novokreshchenye*), foreign born persons (*inozemtsy*), and wandering free peasants (*gulaishchie liudi*) - basically any able-bodied, non-tribute paying males they could find.¹¹⁵ The term of military service was for life unless disabled, and was changed to 25 years of service only in 1793.

Soldiers' families were allowed to retain their land (*desiatin pashne*), but the soldiers themselves received little if any salary, due to state costs to train, feed, clothe, and arm the men.¹¹⁶ As a cumulative effect of tripling the number of men in military service, nearly ten percent of the Siberian census population in 1750 was in the army. This resulted in serious economic consequences, and social welfare issues for women, families, and communities in Siberia. Monastic institutions had historically provided for marginalized members of society, but in their capacity as landowners, they were often as responsible for exploiting vulnerable people as for aiding them. Conscription into newly formed Siberian regiments left wives and families of soldiers less able to produce agricultural products for their monastic landlords, and in need of material support from the church, if they remained on the land. Yet, the more serious issue was

¹¹⁵ Puzanov, "The Formation and Discharge Service," 1187.

¹¹⁶ Puzanov, "The Formation and Discharge Service," 1189-90. In 1757 a small monthly wage was approved for mounted Cossack in order to feed their horses oats or other available fodder – 75 kopeks for a *sotnik* (Cossack in charge of 100 men); 60 kopecks for a *piatidesiatnik* (Cossack in charge of 50 men); and 44 kopecks for a *riadovoi* (a single mounted Cossack).

the state sanctioned permission for women to leave the village to support themselves, depriving the landlords, communities, and families of their labor and that of their children. Soldiers' wives and their children often migrated to the urban quarters of Siberian cities, where they worked in town taverns, as house servants, or traded goods and services. These women often filled roles and functions left empty by conscripted men. In the absence of husbands, soldiers' wives were suspect, and they were frequently seen by men as sexually available, and by women as temptresses who lured men into illicit sex.

The Russian Legal Code

The Russian/Muscovite Law Code of 1649 (*Sobornoye Ulozhenie*) was the comprehensive civil code enacted during the reign of Tsar Alexsei Mikhailovich, and was composed of 968 articles grouped into twenty-five chapters. The *Ulozhenie* was the product of an activist, interventionist, maximalist state that sought to control many aspects of Russian life by codifying the enserfment of the peasantry (chapter 11), the completion of the legal stratification of the townsmen (chapter 19), and the semi-secularization of the church (chapters 13, 14, and 19). Despite the changes in the Russian government that had been enacted in the intervening century, the social and legal practices in the settlement town of Turinsk in the 1740s relied heavily upon precedent and interpretation of the statutes contained in the law code of 1649. The military governor of Turinsk drew on imperial precedent that projected secular power over the influence of the church. In fact, the act of fornication itself was not a criminal matter under the *Ulozhenie*. The 1649 statute, Chapter 22, which was applied to the guilty parties in all of the Turinsk cases, actually dealt with pimping or pandering of girls and women, not premarital sex or infidelity. The government authorities in Turinsk chose to reinterpret it in order to prosecute cases of fornication.

Peasants, townsmen and service men approached the military governor's office with charges of fornication, rather than seeking out ecclesiastical authorities. Turinsk had no bishop or eparchal consistory, so complainants would need to find someone—perhaps a parish priest—to write up their allegations and take them to Tobol'sk.¹¹⁷ Resolution was faster and easier if it could be handled locally. The military governor's willingness to hear the cases not only shows a preference for secular remedies, but also the criminalization of sexual behavior on the frontier. Based on the nature of sexual impropriety, secular and canon law could impose relatively strict punishments, yet in the local rulings in all four of the Turinsk cases presented here, the corporal and legal punishments were less severe for both women and men engaging in illicit sex. Notably, men and women offenders were punished the same way and to the same extent.

The Turinsk local military governor and his staff treated fornication (*blud* or *bludnoe vorovstvo*) as acts that disrupted the natural hierarchy that exists between God and man, ruler and subject, and men and women. This was of particular concern on the periphery of empire, in places like Turinsk. Siberia as well as central Russia had witnessed its share of peasant revolts that questioned the authority and legitimacy of central authority. Yet despite its fears and control measure (intimate and otherwise) against subversion in the provinces, Siberia continued to experience further uprisings in the eighteenth century. As other historians, such as Andrew Gentes and Valerii Puzanov, have argued, the growing service and financial obligations place upon villagers and towns people in Siberia was the true proximate cause of disorder and

¹¹⁷ Priests had no authority to judge violations of canon law; all they could do is refer allegations to the archbishop and the consistory. They could put individuals under penance, but not punish them otherwise.

rebellion in the mid eighteenth century.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, quickly dispatching rulings and enforcing punishments and surety agreements indicates a large degree of legal autonomy for military governors and local officials, a role and responsibility expected of them, especially in Siberia.¹¹⁹ Charges and denunciations began at the local level and were consequently settled at the local level. Local officials nominally invoked imperial authority, but they acted on their own initiative, issuing judgments and carrying out punishments without even notifying their superiors, much less seeking their guidance and approval.

Approaches to Gender and Sexuality

Previous scholarship has separately addressed the questions I pose above. A growing number of scholars continue to study issues of gender, sexuality, and the autonomy of women in early modern and imperial Russia, as well as the complex issues around governance in the Siberian provinces during the second half in eighteenth century. However, the convergence between the two has been little explored.

Natalia Pushkareva and Eve Levin have produced the most comprehensive studies of gender and sexuality in early modern and imperial Russia. Levin's focus on the medieval period (900-1700) provides the context for understanding the traditional world of the Orthodox Slavs, which details lawful and unlawful sexual practice under canon law.¹²⁰ Levin's work crucially provides an understanding of sexuality in the Orthodox world as a dynamic, fluid process. In her view, deeply ingrained conservatism regarding religious devotion resulted in suspicion of any

¹¹⁸ Gentes, *Exile to Siberia*; V.D. Puzanov, *Voennye faktory russkoi kolonizatsii zapadnoi Sibiri: konets XVI- XVII v.*, (Moscow: Aleteia, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 159.

¹²⁰ Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs*; and "Infanticide in Pre-Petrine Russia," *Jarbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, 34, 2 (1986): 215-224.

and all manifestations of sexuality, even in marriage and for procreation. However, Orthodox churchmen and ordinary believers recognized the wide array of temptations, and pragmatically dealt with licentious acts and their reproductive consequences inside marriage and outside of marriage. Pushkareva's work as a pioneer in the field of women's history and gender and sexuality studies in Russia gives a detailed and necessary framework for comprehending the multifaceted roles of women in Russian society from the tenth to the twentieth century.¹²¹ Although she primarily has focused on women in European Russia, her observations regarding gender difference and performance in the Russian context are foundational for awareness of and locating women in society, as the Russian empire transformed individuals and landscapes.

Ethnographer Anna Luitsidarskaia has specifically examined the misconceptions concerning the position and influence of women during the settlement of Western Siberia in the seventeenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century, but she has not explicitly examined issues of gender and sexuality.¹²² In detailing accounts of the military governors' wives and women from all social classes, she writes, "Neither in the documentary materials nor in different kinds of correspondence, nor in the literature of the seventeenth century, are there found scornful attitudes towards women as such. In contrast, in the most diverse sources concerning women (especially noticeable in court cases) they appear as equal members in the

¹²¹ Natalia Pushkareva, *Zhenshchina, gender, kultura*, (Moskva: MTSGI, 1999); *Zhenshchiny rossii i evropy na poroge novogo vremeni*, (Moskva: Biblioteka Rossiiskogo etnografa, 1996); trans. and ed. by Eve Levin, *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

¹²² Luitsidarskaia, "Zhenshchiny v XVII veke," 11-14. For additional work on women in Siberia see her publications on *Narodonaseleniye Sibiri: Strategii i praktiki mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii (XVII – nachalo XX veka)*, Novosibirsk, 2008; and *Starozhily Sibiri. Istoriko-etnograficheskiye ocherki. XVII – nachalo XVIII v.*, (Novosibirsk: "Nauka" Sibirskoe Otdelenie, 1992).

community.”¹²³ Liutsidarskaia’s work demonstrates that “the actions of women played a far less noticeable role in the life of the community, than the members of the stronger sex,” but indeed women were woven into the fabric of public life.¹²⁴

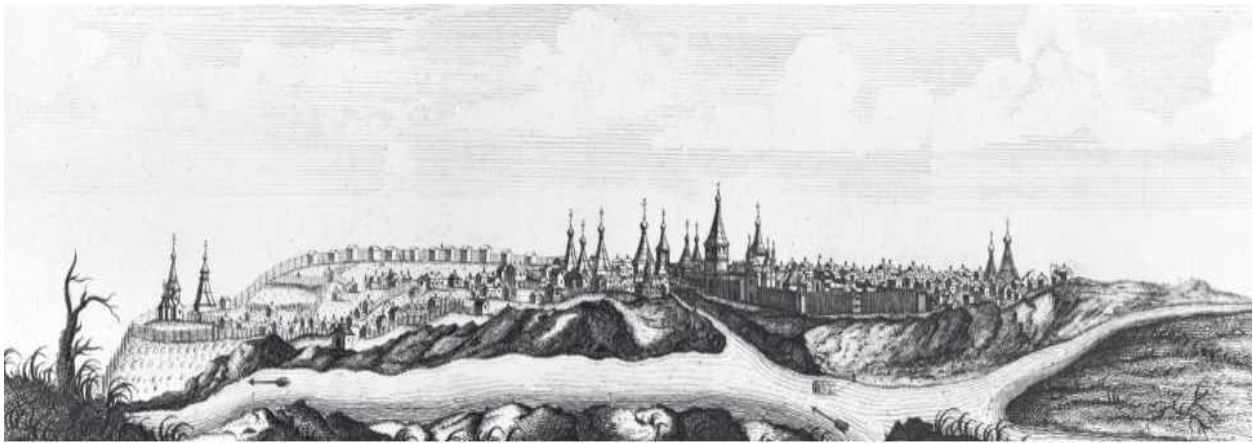


Image from *Entsiklopediia Sibiri, Turinsk*, <http://russiasib.ru/turinsk/>. Turinsk, established as a fortress town in 1600, is located on the right bank of the River Tura (Ob basin), near the confluence of the rivers Iarlynka, 253 km north-east of Ekaterinburg.

The Settlement Town of Turinsk

Located 157 miles northeast of Yekaterinburg, the founding of Turinsk in 1598 is connected with opening of a new shorter path from the upper Tura river to the town of Solikamsk and between the forts (*ostrogi*) at Verkhotur’e and Tiumen, and was necessary for the protection of the water the way to Siberia. Due to arable land located near the city, in the 1640s Turinsk became a major Siberian center of the grain trade. In the eighteenth century, a Siberian transit prison was erected, and it became a place of exile for state criminals. However, not all the residents of Turinsk were exiled prisoners. It had an economically and socially diverse population—peasants, soldiers, traders, clergy, and government officials. By the second half of

¹²³ Liutsidarskaia, “Zhenshchiny v XVII veke,” 13.

¹²⁴ Liutsidarskaia, “Zhenshchiny v XVII veke,” 12.

the eighteenth century the town lost its defensive value because of a new Siberian overland road between Tiumen and Yekaterinburg and Turinsk faded into obscurity.¹²⁵

In the mid-eighteenth century the town had a population of approximately 3,300 people and the local economy was made up of mainly merchant and trading classes. Turinsk housed eight churches, the Nikolskii monastery, a brewery, 13 forges, 10 leather tanneries, 18 brick and masonry workshops, 40 retail establishments, and a paper factory that produced 700-1000 reams of writing paper per year.¹²⁶ Annual income from local fairs and markets exceeded ten thousand rubles.¹²⁷ Despite the variety of population, only petitions of soldiers and their families were recorded in the ten months of documents that survive from the Turinsk Military Governor's Office in 1741. This particular set of documents was sent to Moscow, and it probably does not reflect the total judicial activities of the military governor in that timeframe.

The uncertain nature of soldiering on the frontier and the absence from home was due in part to campaigns to the south, where from 1741 to 1762 Empress Elizabeth issued a crusade to force the Volgulski Tatars to renounce Islam.¹²⁸ Therefore, the prevalence of accusations of illicit sex and charges of fornication concerning soldiers' wives are indicative of the common concern of families whose men were serving or could be called to serve in the military at distant locations for long periods of time.

CASES HISTORIES FROM TURINSK

¹²⁵ G.A. Nozdrin, I.P. Sokolovskii, "Turinsk," *Istoricheskaia Entsikolpediia Sibir*, <http://russiasib.ru/turinsk/>; D.O Skul'movskii "K pervonachal'noi istorii formirovaniia Turinskogo garnizona," *Materiali Vserossiskoi nauchno-prakicheskoi konferentsii*, Kurgan, 24-25 Apr. 2009 (Kurgan, 2009),1.

¹²⁶ *Istoricheskaia Entsikolpediia Sibir*, <http://russiasib.ru/turinsk/>

¹²⁷ *Istoricheskaia Entsikolpediia Sibir*, <http://russiasib.ru/turinsk/>

¹²⁸ A.J. Haywood, *Siberia: A Cultural History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105.

In this section I will detail the documents themselves and look at what they can tell us about the attempts to govern sexual practices in the provinces. By looking at the circumstances and the outcomes of four separate cases brought to the military governor, Captain Sergei Zmeov, which were recorded between the months of March and December of 1741. I will seek to show how imperial laws and degrees were put into practice – sometimes unevenly and imprecisely – but in each case women as well as men were dealt with as individual, conscious actors. My evidence shows that even small provincial areas were quite litigious - bringing complaints, appearing when ordered to testify, admitting guilt or proclaiming innocence, and ultimately complying with orders and decrees of local officials.

Although each case holds particular details and circumstances involving the men and women of Turinsk in the surrounding villages and sectors of the town, a common factor emerges. Each case brought before the military governor was connected with either soldiers or soldiers' wives. Though was a logical course of events in a garrison town governed by a military officer, Captain Zmeov, who held both civil and military powers. As other *voevody* in Siberia, Zmeov was likely appointed for two years and given judicial and police powers in the regions he governed.

The record of these cases stresses the seriousness in which the military governors dealt with accusations of sexual impropriety when it involved soldiers and the lives of their families. The local military governors were charged in gathering service men for the army, but had to also keep the settlement populations appeased and well-ordered, thus a delicate balance had to be struck when dealing with soldiers and the consequences of long absences from home. There existed a very real prospect that men from peasant and merchant families would refuse to serve, if swift and severe consequences were not dealt to fornicators and wayward wives. The overall

order and social stability of Turinsk, and the credibility and legitimacy of the local governing officials was also at stake in maintaining a population of merchants and peasants to serve the greater needs of empire.

In Russia sexual behavior was a matter of public concern. That attitude in fact has been more common in human history, rather than less common. Even the emerging secular state in the eighteenth-century Russia had interests that exceeded moral concerns while it intersected with the sexual behavior of its citizens—the spread of venereal disease (public health), the production of children (increasing the working population), human trafficking (criminal networks), and soldiers' morale. In Russia, sex came under the authority of the Church, and before the eighteenth century, the state did not get involved in sexual and family matters, with a few exceptions, that are mostly recorded in the *Ulozhenie* of 1649. Turinsk had eight churches and one monastery to uphold religious values, but they did not have the authority to hear charges of violations of canon law. However, they could have received complaints and forwarded them to the bishop and consistory, if the complainants and the local community had preferred to take that route. But instead they brought the cases to the military governor. Thus, in keeping with Peter's Spiritual Regulation of 1721, the local Turinsk officials became increasingly involved in matters that had previously been the exclusive domain of the Church, namely overseeing charges and punishments for fornication.

*Case #1 – Marina Alekseeva and Sidor Temnikov, March 20, 1741.*¹²⁹

In celebration of the Nativity of John the Baptist a church feast was held in the village of Shevelev in the month of June in 1740. Traveling from the neighboring village of Tomilov,

¹²⁹RGADA, f. 629 op. 1, d. 29, ll. 1-5, 1740-1741, *Turinsk Voevodskaia kantseliariia* (Tobol'skaia provintsiia Sibirskoi gubernii).

Marina, the daughter of Aleksei, met Sidor Temnikov, a *raznochinets* from the village of Shevelev. The *Raznochintsy* were members of a social estate from the lower ranks of the government and court, who gained their position based on either military service or personal merit. Marina's husband, Stepan Tomilov, was away soldiering, which raised suspicions when she appeared pregnant and close to giving birth nine months later. On March 12th of 1741 Afanasii Pushkarev, a Turinsk town administrator (a *piatidesiatnik*), arrived at the Turinsk office in the village of Tomilov and accused Marina of engaging in illicit sex (*blud, bludnoe vorovstvo*). Not knowing the exact circumstance of her pregnancy, he recommended that she be brought before local officials so that they could find out how a married woman with an absent husband had become pregnant. Marina was brought in later the same day. Under questioning, she admitted that she and Sidor had sex during the church feast day the previous June, and she was now pregnant with his child, since she had sex only with him before becoming pregnant.

The officials then arrested Sidor Temnikov and brought him to the Turinsk office for questioning later that same day. Under interrogation, he agreed that he was in the village of Shevelev where he met Marina, and had sex with her not knowing whether she was married or not. He explained to the court that he himself was not married. Sidor claimed there was no way he could be certain that the child was his, thus raising further questions about Marina's promiscuity. After admitting their guilt before the officials, each begged the interrogators for the mercy of the court. Also, when questioned, both Marina and Sidor agreed that the sex was consensual, that no one besides them knew of their sin, and certainly prostitution was not the case, as no one pimped or pandered Marina to Sidor.

Once all written testimony was taken down, the case was presented to the Turinsk military governor, Captain Zmeov. After hearing the case, the governor found Marina and Sidor

guilty and issued punishment based on the law code of 1649 *Ulozhenie*. As part of the compiled record for this case, and subsequent cases, the court clerks cited the 1649 law code verbatim-- chapter 22, section 25:

If someone of the male gender, or the female gender, having forgotten the wrath of God and Christian law, proceeds to procure adult women and mature girls for fornication, and that is established conclusively: inflict a severe punishment on them for such a lawless and vile business, beat them with the knout.¹³⁰

Although they were charged under the 1649 *Ulozhenie*, which stipulated they were to be beaten mercilessly with the knout, the ruling issued by Captain Zmeov was far less severe than the law called for. Instead of the knout, which could cause permanent physical damage and even death, Marina and Sidor were to be beaten with a *pleti* (a three-pronged whip) as an example to the rest of the community as to what happens when the moral order and law of the land was violated. Although Marina was nine months pregnant, the record listed no exemption from corporal punishment for her, which suggests that they flogging would not be very severe as the officials were concerned for the safety of her unborn child. Both were placed under a surety agreement (*poruka*), a type of parole guaranteed by other members of the community, who took responsibility for ascertaining that the offenders abstained from future sexual contact with each other. In addition, they were forbidden to abort the child, or leave it to perish after birth.

Marina was charged 13 kopeks for her arrest and Sidor was charged 26 kopeks for his arrest, likely based on his higher social status as a *raznochinets*, not necessarily indicating he was more culpable than Marina. By imperial order, additional fees and court costs by were also

¹³⁰A. G. Man'kov, et. al, *Sobornoe ulozhenie 1649 goda: tekst, kommentarii*. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1987), 131. Richard Hellie, *The Muscovite Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649*, (Irvine, CA: Charles Schlacks, 1988).

assessed 20 kopeks for signing, 20 kopeks for recording, 10 kopeks for writing, 1 ½ kopeks for other expenses, 1 ½ kopeks for tax and for the recording of the case and the surety agreement in the Turinsk office and in the office of district peasants. All payments were to be settled with the Turinsk treasurer, Boris Abramov. There is no mention for the financial maintenance of the child, which was the obligation of the mother, Marina, and her family.

Estimating whether the fines and court costs assessed to Marina and Sidor were a financial burden is difficult to determine based on available sources across all social classes in Western Siberia. Based on published data on the Urals, St. Petersburg, and Moscow a rough estimate can be made concerning the wages of the inhabitants of Western Siberia. Ural mining and metallurgy wages for all state workers from 1737 to 1750 averaged at 8.1 kopeks per day; unskilled labor in St. Petersburg in the 1740s-1750s at 2.70 kopeks per day; and in 1725 peasants living in the Moscow area earned 48 kopeks a month, with no data available for Moscow in the 1740s.¹³¹

In this context the fines of 13 and 26 kopecks respectively for Marina and Sidor, coupled with the court costs of an additional 53 kopecks, represented a significant, but not excessive, penalty. It amounted to the equivalent of wages from several weeks of labor, assuming that Marina did not have highly valued skills and that Sidor was not well-paid. In terms of the income Marina,

¹³¹ The International Institute for Social History, List of Data files for Russia has compiled spreadsheets based on the research of Richard Hellie and Boris Mironov at <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/data.php#russia>. Boris Mironov, *The Standards of Living and Revolutions in Russia, 1700-1917*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 309. Mironov states that data from the second half of the eighteenth century is partial at best, but overall real wages steadily declined in the eighteenth century. Stephen Nafziger and Tracy Dennison, "Russia's Income distribution 1678-1913, What the Estimates Imply Thus Far," *Quantifying Long Run Economic Development*, Conference at The University of Warwick in Venice, Palazzo Pesaro Papafava, 22-24 March 2011, point out that rural household budgets were driven by lifecycle events that effected labor productivity and income levels.

especially, and Sidor could spare, the fine probably took up their disposable income for months. In short, the penalty created a significant deterrent to misbehavior, but it did not result in devastation to their lives.

Case # 2 – Fedora Ivanova and Ignatii Shevelev, March 20, 1741¹³²

In the village of Shevelev, likely named for one of its founders, Fedora, an unmarried woman and the daughter of Ivan Shirokovskii of the Tomilov settlement, attended the church feast commemorating the Beheading of John the Baptist on August 29 of 1740. As on many such feast days there was eating, drinking, dancing and singing among the local peasants and villagers. At this gathering Fedora had occasion to meet a local peasant, Ignatii Shevelev, who turned out to be a married man. Eight months later, it appears that their meeting at the Turinsk district office was not quite as cordial as the first. On March 20th of 1741, Afanasii Pushkarev, the same town administrator who had brought charges of fornication against Marina, the woman in the previous case, now accused Fedora of the same crime. Similarly, Fedora was brought before local officials at the Turinsk district office to answer questions about her pregnancy. Fedora admitted that she and Ignatii had sex during the church feast day the previous August, and she was now pregnant with his child. Fedora told the officials that she was certain that it was his child because she had committed the sin of fornication only once with Ignatii. Having admitted her guilt, Fedora entreated “his Imperial Majesty”—that is, she invoked the distant tsar, the infant Ivan VI in St. Petersburg, and threw herself on the mercy of the court.

The officials then arrested Ignatii Shevelev and brought him to the Turinsk office later that day for questioning. Under interrogation, he agreed that he was in the village of Shevelev

¹³² RGADA, f. 629 op. 1, d. 31, ll. 1-5, 1740-1741, *Turinsk Voevodskaia kantseliaria* (Tobol'skaia provintsiia Sibirskoi gubernii).

where he met Fedora, and had sex with her, even though he was married. He asserted that he could not be certain that the child was his. Like Fedora, after admitting his guilt before the officials, he begged for the mercy of the court. Under interrogation both Fedora and Ignatii said that the sex was consensual, that no one else brought them together, and that no one besides them knew of their sin, thus denying that any third party had pimped or pandered the young woman to Ignatii.

Once all written testimony was taken down, the case was presented three days later to the Turinsk military governor, Captain Zmeov. He found Fedora and Ignatii guilty and issued punishment based on the law code of 1649 *Ulozhenie*, Chapter 22, Section 25—that is, the same section cited in the case of Marina and Sidor. As in the previous case, the military governor altered the punishment and the offending couple, Ignatii and Fedora, were to be beaten with a *pleti* (a three-pronged whip) in place of the ominous knout. Still, examples had to be set for the rest of the community. The beating of Ignatii and Fedora came on the heels of another case of fornication, for just a mere eight days earlier on March 12th the small village community no doubt witnessed the flogging of Marina Alekseevna and Sidor Temnikov. The court directed that surety agreements (*poruka*) be issued for both offenders to ensure they no longer had sex with each other, and that the child would not be harmed in any way by the parents. Each of the offenders was ordered to pay the Turinsk district office, specifically to the Turinsk treasurer, Boris Abramov, 13 kopecks for the cost of bringing them in, and an additional 13 kopeks for court costs. Unlike in the case of Marina and Sidor, the record does not note any additional fees for the recording of the case and the surety agreement. Possibly the record is faulty, but it is also possible that Ignatii and Fedora were not forced to pay these additional monies, given their lower social position. Ignatii paid the same amount as Fedora, but half the amount levied against

Sidor, who belonged to a higher social rank of the *raznochintsy*. Yet, whether the father of the illegitimate child was a peasant or a *raznochinets*, the financial maintenance of the child was the obligation of the mother and her family.

In this case from Turinsk show that monetary fees, though not materially oppressive, concretely illustrated the authority and maintenance of order by the military governor and local officials. The military governor adjusted the fines and the court costs to the defendants' social order and consequent ability to pay. It is also notable that the marital status of the offenders did not matter. Ignatii did not pay more because he had violated his marriage vows; neither did Marina in the previous case because she had violated hers. This case is also representative of all of the Turinsk cases studied here in that it designated secular over church law, by admitting the hearing of charges of fornication and the issuing of punishments, however loosely applied, under the Law Code of 1649.

*Case #3 – Efrosiniia Andreeva, the d'iachek Vasilii Grigorevich, and peasants Timofei Pepyshev and Stepan Okulov*¹³³

A third case from the Turinsk district in 1741 records the crime of fornication (*blud*, *bludnoe vorovstvo*, by a soldier's wife after the departure of her husband for military service. On 26 May 1741, Matvei Nemtinov, a peasant from the Sotsko estate in the village of Volkov, appeared at the Turinsk district office to denounce Efrosiniia Andreeva, the daughter-in-law of townsman Iakov Toporkov and the wife of an unnamed soldier from the village of Volkov, for the crime of fornication and illicit pregnancy. Matvei explained he did not know who she was involved with and the court would need to ask Efrosiniia herself.

¹³³ RGADA, f. 629 op. 1, d. 41, ll. 1-7, 1740-1741. *Turinsk Voevodskaia kantseliaria* (Tobol'skaia provintsiia Sibirskoi gubernii).

Efrosiniia was brought in for questioning at the Turinsk district office the same day. During interrogation Efrosiniia testified that once her husband was taken by the army, she in fact did have sex with several men in the area – a churchman (*d'iachek*) Vasilii Grigorevich, and two peasants, Timofei Pepyshev and Stepan Okulov. Efrosiniia was noticeably pregnant, but said that she did not know which man fathered her child.

Next Vasilii Grigorevich was questioned by the court concerning Efrosiniia. He testified that she continually slandered her husband who was away in the army, and told him and others that he could not satisfy her. Vasilii told the court that when he spent the night at her brother-in-law's house, in the previous March of 1740, Efrosiniia was also there. She had been drinking and lured him into bed with her. Vasilii admitted to drinking and having sex with her. Then he returned home, but pointed out that he did not have sex with his wife. Orthodox parish clergy were normally married, as opposed to monastic clergy that made up the ecclesiastical hierarchy from monastic novice at the bottom to patriarch at the top.

If lawfully married men and women had sex during prohibited times designated by church canon law, it was also considered fornication. Clearly, Vasilii thought that it would be a worse sin and crime for him to have sex with his wife at a forbidden time, than for him to have sex with another woman—especially one who was known to be licentious. He also characterized Efrosiniia as the one who took the lead, tempting him into sin and crime. The churchman was drawing upon well-established images of women as being the sexual aggressors, especially determined to lure churchmen into sin, especially at times (Lent) when they were obligated to be abstinent. As further exculpatory evidence, Vasilii pointed out that the incident occurred at his brother-in-law's house, a place where he could legitimately be, rather than at a bar.

The local Turinsk court also arrested Timofei Pepyshev and Stepan Okulov on charges of fornication with Efrosiniia. Each admitted that she willingly had sex with them, but each stated that he did not know who was the father of the child. The two peasants did not give a date or details on the specific instance of their illicit sexual encounters with Efrosiniia. As in the two previous cases, the accused made it clear that the sex was consensual, that no one besides them knew of their sin, and neither pimping, pandering nor prostitution was involved, as no one else brought Efrosiniia to them. As we saw with the cases of Marina and Sidor, and Fedora and Ignatii, such protestations were normal, as the accused parties wished to escape more serious charges of prostitution. Yet in Efrosiniia's case, with her three known sexual partners, it is certainly possible that she sought payment. Still, the charge of pimping would not apply, if she offered herself.

The same provision of the 1649 Ulozhenie, chapter 22, section 25, was cited in this case. Military governor Zmeov issued the sentences to those found guilty. Timofei Pepyshev and Stepan Okulov were to be beaten with a whip (*pleti*) instead of the knout and made to pay 26 kopeks from their wages to the Turinsk district office – one kopek at a time until paid off. Further, they were placed under a surety agreement (*poruka*) to ensure payment and that no harm came to the illegitimate child after its birth. Regardless of her pregnancy, Efrosiniia was also whipped, and she, too was placed under a surety bond to ensure she no longer continued engaging in illicit sex, and guarantee she did no harm to the illegitimate child. However, she was not ordered to pay the court for her arrest or any subsequent fees. Vasilii Grigorevich, being under the regional jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox bishop, was ordered to the Tobol'sk ecclesiastic court for punishment set by the episcopate, but still had to pay 13 kopeks for the cost of arrest and an additional 52 kopeks for court fees to the Turinsk treasurer, Boris Abramov.

Finally, all of the fornicators were ordered to the St. Catherine church in the village of Volkov on June 16, 1741, which was likely the congregation Vasilii served in as a churchman, where he would be shamed before the community and the others beaten to show the village what happened to those who upset the moral order and violated the law.

In each of the Turinsk cases women testified to the fact that they willingly had illicit sex and named the men with whom they were involved, yet this case is particularly illustrative of women's legal accountability and their overall treatment as autonomous, conscious actors in dissolute behavior. The military governor and local official recognized Efronsiniia's guilt as well as the men involved and equally meted out justice. Although she had admitted to having illicit sex with two peasants and a churchman, her punishment was no more severe than the women who admitted to only one unlawful sexual partner. Even though Vasilii was a churchman, and therefore his sexual misconduct was more scandalous, he was not punished more severely than laymen were, at least by the Turinsk governor. His fine was set at the same level of that of persons of the peasantry among whom he lived, although he also had to pay court costs, at the same level as Sidor, the *raznochinets*.

*Case #4 – Denunciations of fornication against women and girls by the peasant Ivan Sapozhnikov, November 29th - December 3rd in 1741*¹³⁴

The last cases of fornication to be examined is a set of three intertwined denunciations all brought by a peasant from the Blagoveshchensk district under the jurisdiction of the Turinsk military governor, Captain Zmeov.

The soldier's wife Ofimiia and the peasant Andrei Kozhin

¹³⁴ RGADA f. 629 op. 1, d. 46, ll. 1-11, *Turinsk Voevodskaia kantseliaria* (Tobol'skaia provintsiia Sibirskoi gubernii), 1740-1741.

In late May 1741, on the feast of the Holy Trinity (or Pentecost),¹³⁵ in the Blagoveshchensk district, Ofimiia, a soldier's wife and the daughter of Fedor Nemyshev, a merchant and landowner, met an unmarried peasant, Andrei Kozhin. On 29 November 1741, the peasant Ivan Sapozhnikov, an employee of Fedor Nemyshev, arrived at the Turinsk local office and brought forward charges of fornication and illicit pregnancy against Ofimiia. Ivan claimed to know no other details about her condition, and suggested that the local officials ask Ofimiia to give an account of her circumstances.

Ofimiia was arrested and brought before the court. She confessed to having sex with the peasant Andrei Kozhin while at the feast. She stressed that no one brought them together; no one knew of this—that is, the usual denial of involvement in pandering and prostitution. She averred that she had sex with Andrei only once, and also that they were not related spiritually or by blood—that is, that their sexual union had not been incestuous. Ofimiia admitted her guilt and asked for the mercy of the court in the name of his imperial majesty.

That same day Andrei was arrested and questioned. He agreed the sex act took place, and similarly stressed that it was consensual, that he and Ofimiia were in no way related, and that prostitution was not involved. However, he implored the court that there was no way for him to know if the child was truly his. Andrei also asked for the mercy of the court after admitting his sin of fornication.

After receiving the respondents' testimonies, four days later, the military governor Captain Zmeov proclaimed his sentencing and issued punishment, again citing Chapter 22, Section 25 of the 1649 law code. Andrei and Ofimiia were to be beaten mercilessly with a whip

¹³⁵ The exact date is not mentioned in the record, however using the Orthodox calendar from 1741 it is possible to determine that exact date. The feast of the holy Trinity, known as Pentecost (50 days following Easter) is a moveable feast with dates changing yearly.

so that others will see, remember, and fear such punishments. Andrei was to pay 13 kopeks to the military governor's treasury for the arrest and escort to court. Each were also held under a surety bond (*poruka*), Ofimiia and Andrei were placed under the watchful eyes of the community, so they would pay court fees and do no harm to the infant, with either attempts of abortion or infanticide.

Retired Corporal Vasilii Poluboiarskii, Ret. Soldier Emelian Semetskin & Matvei Grebenev (tsel'ovanik), the young woman Dar'ia and her stepfather Klement Babukhin

On November 29th, the same peasant, Ivan Sapozhnikov, also reported to the Turinsk local office of additional licentious acts in the local community. He accused a retired corporal, Vasilii Poluboiarskii, along with several other men of sexual sin (*bludnoe grekh*) with a young, unmarried woman, Dar'ia, in a local tavern. Ivan recounted how the girl's stepfather caught the retired corporal, another retired soldier, Emelian Semetskin, and a tseloval'nik,¹³⁶ Matvei Grebenev, drinking and having sex with Dar'ia.

When the retired corporal Poluboiarskii appeared before the court on December 1st to testify, he stated that only Matvei Grebenev had sex with Dar'ia, although all three men had been in the tavern. Yet when Emelian Semetskin was brought to testify two days later, he said nothing of his involvement with Dar'ia. Instead, he reported sexual misconduct by other parties: a local woman Oksenia, the daughter-in-law of Vasilii Shchirik, and Petr Tolstykh.

Matvei Grebenev also was called to testify on 3 December. Unlike Emelian, Matvei admitted to having sex with Dar'ia, claiming that she approached him in the tavern. Dar'ia's

¹³⁶ *Tseloval'niki* were government officials in counties and trading quarters outside the city walls, for the enforcement of judicial, financial and police duties. Chosen people swore fidelity to perform their duties honestly and took an oath to the tsar by "kissing the cross," hence the name.

stepfather, Klement Babukhin, corroborated his story. Babukhin wanted the court to know that the retired corporal, Vasiliĭ Poluboiarskii, was not being truthful, as Babukhin claimed that he had witnessed sex between the corporal and his stepdaughter. Babukhin then reminded the court it should remember that Matvei was under the command of the local commander Aritov. Even though Babukhin agreed that his stepdaughter approached Matvei in the tavern, he also invoked the emperor's majesty in pleading with the court to find guilty the men who defiled his stepdaughter. The young woman Dar'ia made no statement to the court, and there is no record of her story except through details of the event through her stepfather and the accused men.

After receiving all respondents' testimonies and guided by the Chapter 22, Section 25 of the 1649 law code, Captain Zmeov issued the following sentence and punishment: Matvei Grebenev was to be beaten mercilessly with a whip so that others will see, remember, and fear such punishments. Matvei was also sentenced to pay 78 kopeks for the cost of his arrest, and the recording of the case in the Turinsk district office. He was ordered to remit that amount to the military governor's treasurer, Boris Abramov, at a rate of 1 kopek as his earnings allowed. The fine of 78 kopeks was considerably higher than other men found guilty of similar crimes, suggesting that as a *tseloval'nik*, an official of the court, he should be held to a high standard of conduct, or possibly that he had a better income and so could afford to pay more. Additionally, if Dar'ia was in fact a girl under the age of twelve and had been a virgin, constituting rape of a child, then the weight of the fine and social sanctions were great, but not particularly severe.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs*, 187, 216-217; Kollman, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia*, 220. Levin writes that there was a high degree of societal hostility to the sexual exploitation of children, and penance of 12 years was imposed for and adult having sex with a girl under the age of twelve. Levin also notes that Byzantine civil law, which influenced Slavic law, also called for the heavy fines imposed on men deflowering a maiden. Regarding sexual crime of rape, Kollmann writes that although rape was traditionally included in church law codes, judges treated the rape of girls and women seriously, and cites the

This suggests that the rape of a girl in eighteenth-century Russia evoked less outrage than might be suspected. The economic status of the participants and the ability to pay the fine mattered, but not their marital status or sexual purity.

The punishment of the two retired soldiers, Vasili Poluboiarski and Emelian Semetskin, and the Dar'ia in the tavern received no mention in the documents, suggesting that the military governor believed the two men when they denied sexual contact with the young girl even though her stepfather claimed to have seen them in the act of fornication. Dar'ia also was not called to testify and was not punished by the court implying that she could be under the age of twelve, and remained under the authority of her stepfather. There is no mention of surety agreement placed upon Matvei, likely due to his position as a *tseloval'nik* who his working at the direction of the local military governor's office.

The complied case of denunciations brought by peasant Ivan Sapozhnikov, November 29th through December 3rd in 1741 reinforces three previous cases presented to the Turinsk officials in March through May earlier in the year, providing substantial evidence of female autonomy, the concern of social stability over the reproductive function of women, and the military governor's assertion of secular over the law of the church.

At this time in the Russian empire prostitution was explicitly illegal, with many of its offenders facing exile to Siberia. None of the women involved in these cases were specifically identified as prostitutes. But possibly both Efrosiniia, who had sex with three different men, and Dar'ia, accused of soliciting sex at a tavern, did so in anticipation of compensation. But neither they nor their lovers admitted to money changing hands, and no law forbade women from

1715 Military Articles, nos. 167-8, RZ IV: 359 in the knouting on the rack and in the market place concerning the rape of a Tatar girl in Tobol'sk.

attending festivities with men from outside their families. Community censure for payment for sex made the act more serious than when it was committed out of affection, no matter how fleeting.

The prospect of abortion and infanticide also figures prominently and is made mention of in each of the cases. Where the local officials and military governor may have been able to be lenient with the application of punishment for the criminal violation of fornication, the 1649 Law code is pronounced, and merciless regarding the acts of willful abortion and infanticide. Chapter 22, statute 26 of the 1649 *Ulozhenie* reads:

If a woman proceeds to live in fornication and vileness, and in fornication begets children with someone; and she herself, or someone else at her command, destroys those children; and that is established conclusively: punish with death without any mercy such lawless women and that person who destroyed her children at her order so that others looking on will not commit such a lawless and vile deed and will refrain from fornication.¹³⁸

Although none of these cases showed the women or their lovers actually killing their illegitimate child, the fact that the records of their cases did not cite this provision from the *Ulozhenie* suggests that Zmeov did not anticipate imposing its full weight, even if the illegitimate children had died.

CONCLUSIONS

The legal, social, and moral boundaries navigated by lower ranking soldiers and their families as a result of conscription practices in imperial Russia is poignantly seen in the frontier environment of Siberia in the eighteenth century. The cases heard by local officials on March 12,

¹³⁸ Man'kov, *Sobornoe ulozhenie 1649 goda*, 131.

1741 through December 3, 1741 show the adjudication, sentences, and punishments issued by local official appear nearly identical concerning corporal punishments, however court costs and fees assessed varied widely. Monies to be paid to the Turinsk Treasury appear to be based on the social order of the offender and their ability to pay, rather than the nature of the offense or the marital status of the offenders. Adult women and men were treated equally under the law indicating that women were treated as conscious actors in the crime of fornication, and that individual autonomy was not only the preserve of men in eighteenth-century frontier settlement towns. Existing scholarship speaks of the rebellious reputation of soldier's wives,¹³⁹ yet the cases out of Turinsk in 1741 show little, if any differentiation in the punishments and sentences issued by the military governor and local officials for the wives of military men and their lovers. Additional reasons for the even application of the law becomes apparent when analyzing the statutory phrasing of the 1649 law code, in Chapter 22, section 25. This provision has to do with arranging prostitution or illicit sex—not exactly the matters that these cases actually concern. In each of the cases, no one other than the lovers themselves had arranged the intimate rendezvous. Technically, the statute cited in the case documents calls for the punishment of the pimps or panderers, not of the women or their male lovers. Clearly, the officials stretched the provision of the 1649 *Ulozhenie* to assert the authority of secular law over church law, and to deal with problematical situations that were different from those for which the law was designed.

Throughout the course of events in these thorny cases, a picture of settlement life with all its irregularities emerges. Although marriage and the family unit had to be maintained, there were no directives from the military governor's office for marriage to rectify their illicit sex,

¹³⁹ Janet M. Hartley, *Siberia: A History of the People*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 118.

even when the woman and the man involved were single, as in the case of Dar'ia and Matvei. Even a child born out of wedlock was allowed baptism, and although young mothers also faced corporal punishment, it was not to the degree to which the unborn infant could be harmed. The military governor, Captain Zmeov, employed discretion in punishments, and coped with the realities of town life that allowed for a degree of lascivious behavior if soldiers and their wives knew the boundaries of behavior. Based on the outcomes from these four cases, illicit sex may not have been the greatest issue to the community but rather illicit sex that produced an illegitimate child. Without the child, it may not have been worth the court's time and public scandal to prosecute. The military governor acted only when complaints were brought to him, and complaints were brought primarily when the woman had become pregnant. In the only case in which there was no untimely pregnancy, that of Dar'ia and Matvei, the woman was not hauled into court, two of the three men accused of having sex with her were not found guilty, and only Matvei as an officer of the court was found guilty and punished. The military governor might have decided that he had to correct the dissolute behavior of a *tseloveral'nik* whose duties included bringing other offenders before the local court.

An important consideration is how these cases came to the attention of the military governor's office. In none of the cases did the pregnant woman report the case, perhaps in hopes of securing child support from the father of the unborn baby. Yet, the men who admitted to sex with the pregnant women were not required to pay any child support. Even more striking, the women's families did not report the illicit sex, even when Dar'ia's stepfather, Klement Babukhin, actually witnessed it occurring. Once news of the incident reached the authorities, he testified about it and asked for the men to be found guilty, but initially he did not come forward with a complaint against the men. In all of these cases, it was outsiders—persons who had

nothing to do with any of the persons involved—who brought complaints to the authorities. While Afanasii Pushkarev, as a town administrator, might have felt an obligation to report misbehavior, in the other two cases, it was unrelated peasant men who snitched. These cases reveal two aspects of eighteenth-century frontier culture in Siberia. First, sexual misbehavior was not a private matter, but rather a public one, that concerned the community as a whole. Anyone in the community could bring a complaint, and the offenders were punished in front of the community. Second, similar to European Russian, Siberian political culture likewise thrived on denunciations. The government encouraged them as a way of uncovering threats to social and political order in a situation in which it was unable to police people's conduct directly.

All the persons reporting the offenses were men. Except in the case of Dar'ia, when the complainant witnessed the sex act personally, the complainants became aware of the situation when the woman's pregnancy became obvious. It's likely that the women's family members, especially the women family members, would have known about the pregnancy much earlier. But they said nothing. This wasn't a situation in which "proper" women policed the behavior of "improper" women, to uphold their own superior status, but rather local men sought to regulate the conduct of women.

It was imperative that swift justice be meted out, yet punishments and fines handled at the local level were not severe. As directed by imperial authorities and appropriate to the rank of the offenders, Zmeov did not seek guidance or approval for his rulings from the Siberian provincial capital at Tobol'sk, much less the imperial capital at St. Petersburg. Additional cases continue to show that maintaining peace in the home was an integral part of maintaining order on the frontier.

It becomes clear from these cases that women and men were treated as autonomous, individual juridical subjects, held equally responsible for their misconduct. In addition, women's reproductive capabilities were not the primary interest of local officials. Although they warned the guilty parties against killing the illegitimate child, they did nothing to try to promote reproduction otherwise. If reproduction was of primary importance then unmarried, but sexually active, women, such as Dar'ia would be ordered to marry—most likely her lover. The local officials could have advocated granting divorces to unhappy, lonely soldiers' wives, so they could remarry the single men with whom they had sex, but they did not. Orthodox Church provisions provided ample grounds for such action: a wife's infidelity was grounds for divorce, and remarriage after divorce was permitted. Additionally, officials made no arrangements for the support of the illegitimate children. All this suggests that they were not overwhelmingly concerned with reproduction, despite Gentes' argument to the contrary.

The prohibition on infanticide, as evidence of a policy of promoting reproduction, is an inadequate explanation. More reasonable explanations do exist. The emerging idea that children were not the property of parents, but rather considered subjects of the tsar provides sound reasoning to why the secular law of the 1649 *Ulozhenie* makes killing infants a crime. In canon law, infanticide had been a sin for centuries, long before a natalist policy had been thought of.¹⁴⁰

In addition, the coopting of church authority in matters of sexual behavior displays the fidelity of local officials to imperial policies. The traditional close association between church and state, especially from the 1660s on, shows the intent to ensure social stability on the Siberian frontier was in part assumed by secular officials in the eighteenth century. Indeed, Peter the Great freely countermanded Church policies that he considered to inhibit state functions.

¹⁴⁰ Levin, "Infanticide in Pre-Petrine Russia," 217; and Cracraft, 95.

State involvement in church affairs was overarching under Peter's rule and the reign of subsequent monarchs in the eighteenth century. However, Peter's prohibition on entry into monastic orders for women in childbearing years should also not be conflated to imply natalist policies of local and imperial officials. Instead, that policy must be seen in parallel with his similar restriction on young men becoming monks instead of soldiers.¹⁴¹ Previous scholarship has incorrectly depicted women as victims of the state and predatory men, and mistakenly has relegated women as primarily sexual beings used for growing the local populace and expanding a much needed labor force for settlement and defense of the frontier. It was fundamental for the local government officials to resolve lawlessness, in the form of illicit sex and unwanted pregnancies, and thus provide a mechanism for frontier communities to live under the moral guidelines of church and state that recognized both men and women as individual juridical subjects.

¹⁴¹ Cracraft, 251.

CHAPTER 3 - ECCLESIASTICAL IMPERIALISM: IMPLANTATION OF ORTHODOXY

This chapter will focus on the implantation of Orthodoxy in Siberia as a practice of ecclesiastical imperialism. For authorities in Moscow and Siberia, regulating moral conduct of Orthodox Russians was a critical aspect to establish a presence, even hegemony on the frontier. Orthodox institutional programs that established legitimate beliefs and practices and the spread of an Orthodox conception of the world were rooted and entwined in the intimate lives of men and women. This chapter will provide a context of how church hierarchs sometimes imposed adherence to Orthodoxy through spiritual missions and regulatory bodies to advance the implantation of Orthodox belief and practice in Siberia. Further, it will establish the importance of proper moral conduct and ritual observance for men and women on the frontier. In addition, it will illustrate how organic forms of popular belief arose in Siberia, and how they became accepted as legitimate. Incorporating the concern for women on the frontier was part of larger agenda of the first archbishop of Tobol'sk. His alarm at sexual impropriety and abuse of women was likely genuine; however, it also galvanized the request for state funds and land grants to churches and monasteries in Siberia.

The Russian Orthodox Church used a two-pronged approach of land acquisition and the use of Orthodox moral precepts and paternalistic practices, to legitimize its territorial expansion in Siberia. Although visual and spatial implantation of Orthodoxy often reflected the hierarchical structures of center-periphery relations, this chapter will also consider the mutually supportive yet at times contentious forces within the Orthodox community in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A separate chapter will be devoted to land acquisition through the establishment of monastic spaces, but legitimation and expansion were intertwined in

seventeenth-century Siberia, and the roles of the church and state were interchangeable, not fixed.

While expansion might occur first, justification for expansion was always voiced in religious terms by church and state alike. In the process of Siberian expansion lands were gathered in the name of the tsar, but defended in the name of the Orthodox people inhabiting the land. Spaces that monasteries claimed were always marked as such by God--through the presence of an icon miraculously appearing on a tree or rock or a spring, or through a vision of a sacred person or a divine manifestation.

Scholarship on Orthodox institutions in Siberia has generally blurred the intertwined authority of church and state, and downplayed the ascendancy of the church. Marxist-inspired scholars of the twentieth century were obligated to discount these stories as unimportant, and focused instead on the expansion of monastic landholdings and the economic interests of the church. Meanwhile, Orthodox-inspired scholars of the Imperial and post-Soviet periods were compelled to focus only on pious accounts, accepting them at face value, and thus emphasizing the spiritual and evangelical mission. A reassessment, and further examination of the historical sources will attempt to balance the two.

I argue that implantation of Orthodoxy in the seventeenth century was initially an attempt to regulate Orthodox religious practice from above, but these efforts were transformed by the multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment to form a multilayered interaction of beliefs in Siberia. Convents and monasteries functioned to mark sanctioned religious spaces, but also adapted to local conditions and frontier needs. Development of infrastructures in towns and villages, population growth, and migration for European Russia contributed to the spread of

Orthodox belief in the eighteenth century, but its practices varied among the church sanctioned Orthodox, schismatic, sectarian, and newly baptized communities.

While the residents within the boundaries of the Russian Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries acknowledged the suzerain power, it did not follow that they felt themselves to be “Russian.” They were aware that a multiethnic, multi-religious population shared the empire. As Jane Burbank has noted, divisions between the ruler and the ruled evolved continuously, and the comprehensive classification of Russian subjects did not catalogue peoples entirely based on their ethnicity, class, or gender, but particularly on their usefulness to the Russian state. Identification as an Orthodox Christian functioned to unite disparate populations in imperial spaces, although the Russian state and Church did not insist upon forcing conformity with involuntary conversions. Conversion by itself did not erase ethnic difference; the newly baptized Orthodox remained relatively suspect based on cultural differences. But after a generation or two, if they remained among the faithful, their identity as Orthodox was considered genuine. Class, based on the occupation of the head of the family, and gender, still functioned as distinguishing markers in larger society.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, local officials in Siberia continuously bemoaned religious conditions on the frontier and petitioned for clerical support from regional and central church authorities. The patriarch and tsar answered the request by establishing a new archbishopric in Siberia acknowledging the religious, political, and economic benefits of adding an ecclesiastic hierarchical system on the frontier that was bound by Muscovite authority. Bolstered by church rhetoric of fallen and depraved practices and actual conditions in Siberia, the church cast monasteries and convents as viable and legitimate institutions to serve as symbols of Russian rule, and scions of Orthodoxy in Siberian spaces.

Spiritual and Economic Objectives

The motivations for building monasteries and convents in Siberia were pragmatic, and two-fold. Orthodox practice, which had evolved on the frontier unchecked, was, in the eyes of church hierarchs, completely unacceptable. The degree of impoverishment of church institutions, and the lack of order and discipline was fully realized once the tsar and patriarch in Moscow authorized the establishment of the Siberian Archbishopric, and its first archbishop arrived in 1621. The correction of monastic practice was a key component in the religious transformation of Siberia because it answered the perceived need for individual as well as corporate moral regeneration, and accomplished the objective to claim land in the name of God and the tsar. If the church sought to keep settler exploitation of native populations in check, then it was for practical economic reasons, not necessarily connected to religious tolerance. In the process of expansion, lands would be taken from indigenous populations for the use of the church and state, but rather than annex by force, representatives of the church were to negotiate these spaces by asserting superior religious authority, and the need to submit to the will of God. Settler exploitation of native people undermined the important, expedient mission of the church, and reflected the disorder of secular authorities who could not police their own colonists. Although military forces often defeated native resistance, their reach was limited, and thinly spread across the eastern borderlands of the empire. On the other hand, convents and monasteries served as fixed institutions that marked fledgling Russian rule on the frontier. Within trade and military outposts, monasteries and churches fortified Russian spaces physically. They supported and regulated newly arrived Orthodox co-religionists settling in towns and villages, and monitored the religious practices of native peoples who chose Orthodox Christian baptism.

As the church projected a spiritual and moral mission, its goals were to implant Orthodoxy from above, and construct an ordered religious world that conformed to church doctrine. Yet, as the practice of Orthodoxy grew in Siberia, the forms developed along organic lines, and were influenced by local conditions. What emerged was a dynamic mix of practices that included the replication of old forms and the propagation of new forms. Men and women who identified as Orthodox believers arrived in Siberia ahead of formally-established churches and monasteries. In the absence of clerical support, they practiced and transmitted their religion in accordance with their own comprehension of the faith, based in memory of church teachings and family practices. They negotiated religious life on the frontier without priests to administer the rites of marriage, baptism, and death. Once priests arrived and fledgling church parishes were established by local communities, popular practices still prevailed. Priests sanctified marriages between Orthodox men and native women and baptized their children, while local, non-Orthodox religious practices and beliefs influenced their understanding of the spiritual world. Despite the loose affiliation and moral laxity of clergy and believers that so concerned church hierarchs when they arrived on the scene in the 1620s, by the late 1630s the head of the Orthodox Church in Siberia embraced some popular forms of worship by identifying Siberia as a special spiritual space.

The correcting and assimilating of Orthodox practice and belief reflected a multifaceted approach to the spread of Christianity, while asserting the authority of the Orthodox Church. The moral agenda of the church underwrote its commanding position as political, economic, and social arbiter in a vacuum of Russian rule on the frontier, while it simultaneously functioned as an indispensable instrument in the process of cultural assimilation of disparate Orthodox and non-Orthodox populations. The struggle with Orthodox sectarianism that arose in the middle of

the seventeenth century also threatened the authority of both the church and the state in Siberia. Schismatic and sectarian populations increased because of exile, or because persecuted religious dissenters fled to the borderlands. The early modern Russian state attempted to bolster their rule through quasi-state institutions in a similar manner to other early modern European states. The Russian government, too, transplanted populations, especially criminals and religious dissenters, promoted economic development and resource extraction, and established unequal relations with indigenous peoples through conversion, acculturation or assimilation.

Unlike colonial practices of Catholic Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, where coerced Christianization was the rule, Russian principles of imperial expansion were pragmatic and gradual. They resembled the second phase of British and French colonial activity in Africa and Asia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when missionaries were "agent, scribe and moral alibi" that benefitted both the ruler and the ruled.¹⁴² As a multiethnic and multi-religious state from its inception, Russian authorities were accustomed to interacting with non-Christian populations in contiguous territories. They sought to spread its cultural forms of rule that included Orthodox belief, but did not decree wholesale conversion of native populations.

"Conquest" and Orthodox Practice in Western Siberia

The "conquest of Siberia" is traditionally dated to 1582, when the Cossack ataman, Ermak Timofeovich, led over 800 armed forces to establish a foothold on the Western Siberian plain. At the Battle of Chuvash Cape Kuchum, the last khan of the Khanate of Sibir was defeated

¹⁴² Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Africa Observed: Discourses of the Imperial Imagination," in Roy R. Grinker, et. al., *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 32.

when Ermak captured the fortress at Qasliq (Isker). The Khanate of Sibir, founded in the fifteenth century, was the northern-most Muslim state following the fragmentation of the Mongol Empire. It held lands in southwest Siberia, and had ruled over a multiethnic and multiconfessional population that included Turkic Siberian Tatars, Bashkirs, and Uralic peoples. The original military campaign to defeat Siberian Tatar forces ended with Ermak's offensive, but the process of securing and settling Siberian lands inhabited by Tatar and other indigenous peoples would take centuries.

It is worth noting that the Muscovite tsar did not send Ermak and his Cossacks. Instead they were self-governed freebooters gathering wealth for themselves. They were originally employed as a private army of the Stroganov family. The Stroganovs were wealthy industrialists who were granted lands in the Kama River basin in exchange for financing the development of saltworks, farming, hunting and fishing production. These lands were forcibly annexed from the native populations in the Ural Mountains and Siberia. Ermak recognized the Muscovite tsar as the overlord of Siberia not because he was an agent of Muscovy, but because it was expedient for him to do so. He wanted to rely on military support if the Siberian Tatars decided to regroup (as they did at Qashliq) and challenge Cossack claims.

The new expanse of lands now under the Tsardom of Muscovy were largely contested spaces, loosely held and difficult to administer from far away Moscow and from the headquarters of local military governors. Beginning in the late 1580s and 1590s, Moscow established Russian fortresses, and the Orthodox believers who had accompanied, survived or followed on after the military expeditions accepted clerical authority insofar as it did not conflict with the exigent circumstances of the frontier, where theft, drunkenness, rape and assault were daily occurrences. The administration for formalized religious needs, such as baptism, marriage, and last rites was

of secondary concern. Russian Orthodox customs and beliefs, or at least prevailing notions of Orthodoxy held by Siberian Cossacks, military and state servitors, merchants, tradesmen, and settlers, was first loosely implanted within their local community of believers, and likely observed with a degree of curious skepticism by native inhabitants.

The need for women on the frontier counts among the pragmatic needs of the expanding Russian empire. Officials in Moscow received complaints from Orthodox clerics about the shortage of women for marriage, and about concubinage, the selling of wives, and rape. Siberian governors and their servitors, however, generally tolerated such behavior. When clerics arrived from Moscow, they promoted the conversion of native women taken as wives to stem some of the pervasive sexual practices. However, they perceived a more immediate need for the “instruction” of priests and other clerics to conduct baptisms and marriages, as well as reinforce the correct practice of Orthodoxy among believers.

In 1611, the Siberian military governor wrote to the Vologda Eparchy, and asked Archbishop Silvestr’, the hierarch then responsible for Siberia, to send five or six priests. The governor explained that “In Tobol’sk and all Siberian towns many parishes have no priests, and the churches stand silent without singing, many people die without the sacrament, children are not baptized, and the few churches that stand have no altar cloths (antimins).”¹⁴³ The antimins is an essential element for the consecration of a church. Without the antimins, the church buildings

¹⁴³ *Istoriia Russkoi Tserkvi*, ed. Mitropolita Makarii, (St. Petersburg: Tovarishchestvo. R. Golike i A. Vil’borg, 1903) t. 11, kn. 2, 35-36. The “antimins” – the altar cloth that covers the table the Gospel and communion bread, which must be blessed by a bishop of the church, and without which the liturgy was not to be read. It is hard to tell whether the few remaining priests were truly concerned about the altar cloths, or requesting a bishop not an altar cloth be sent some 1,500 miles from Moscow. On the other hand, the governor’s, and presumably the priest’s, request for altar cloths presented church officials with a plausible reason why priests were not conducting liturgical services, a common complaint forwarded to authorities in Moscow.

were not properly consecrated, and the sacraments performed in them were of dubious legitimacy. The antimins contains small bits of relics of the saints, and so it could not be produced locally, but instead it had to be imported from European Russia. Through the medium of the saints' relics, the antimins channeled divine grace from heaven to the sacred space of the altar, the church, and the surrounding community. It was emblematic of the implantation of Orthodoxy.

In recognition of the need of clerical support and leadership in Siberia, Patriarch Filaret established a formal Orthodox administrative structure for Siberia. This brought an official agenda to institute sanctioned forms of Orthodox belief and practice to the frontier to help govern the faithful and to combat debased frontier life.

Kiprian as Archbishop of Siberia and Tobol'sk - 1620-1624

Kiprian was already an eminent church hierarch and a loyal Novgorodian when he was chosen to establish the Archbishopric of Siberia and Tobol'sk. As the archimandrite of the Novgorod Spaso-Khutynskii monastery, he went to Sweden in 1611 at the request of the Novgorod local government to invite Prince Philip to take the Russian throne the absence of a clear successor during the Time of Troubles. Because Novgorod was under Swedish occupation, his mission was fraught with political difficulties, and he was arrested and tortured for "searching out [Swedish] state secrets about Russia," and kept in custody until 1613.¹⁴⁴ With Swedish plans to assume the Russian throne abandoned, Kiprian had shown himself to be reliably loyal to Russia, and knowledgeable about secular politics. As a prominent churchman in

¹⁴⁴ *Biograficheskii slovar'*, 2000. <http://www.rulex.ru/01111195.htm> first accessed February 25, 2018. For additional information about Swedish occupation of Novgorod see: Elisabeth Lofstrand and Laila Nordquist, *Accounts of an Occupied City: Catalogue of the Novgorod Occupation Archives, 1611-1617*, vol. I-II, (Stockholm: Skrifter utgivna av Riksarkivet, 2009).

Novgorod, he was doubtless aware of the efforts to Christianize the far north. Kiprian desired to eventually serve as Metropolitan of Novgorod, the second most important eparchy in Muscovy, after Kazan. Kiprian needed to serve first as a bishop or archbishop elsewhere in order to reach the position of metropolitan, and agreeing to establish the eparchy of Tobol'sk was a shrewd career move.

Arrival in Tobol'sk

Kiprian arrived in Tobol'sk accompanied by 59 churchmen and servitors in the autumn of 1621. Many of the garrison towns and outposts he traveled through had already constructed local churches and monasteries in the preceding twenty years. Yet there was a lack of clergy on the frontier. Some clerics had abandoned their posts; others remained, but they had fallen out of favor with military governors and other members of the community. Based on the requests for clerical support, Kiprian expected a warmer welcome. When he requested lodging for his party, the military governor, Boyar M. M. Godunov, responded that they would have to live in the lower half of the city since there was no room for his entourage within the governor's stronghold in the upper city. The lower half of the city near the Irtysh River was an area designated for Tatar villages, and it lacked the protection of the wooden fortress of the upper city. Kiprian was clearly offended by the discourtesy, and reported his cool reception to the patriarch and tsar in Moscow.¹⁴⁵ So began a long correspondence on the actions and behaviors of Godunov and his men.

¹⁴⁵ Safronov, *Svetochi zemli sibirskoi*, 13, 15. The information Safronov relays matches N. N. Pokrovskii and E. K. Romodanovskaia, *Tobol'skii arkhieieiskii dom v XVII veke*, (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograf, 1994). The inventory of documents contains additional documents on personnel, funds, and lands granted to Archbishop Kiprian

Kiprian likely lived some months in the rough conditions in the lower city before the tsar's instructions reached Governor Godunov that ordered him to find space for the archbishop at his house, or other suitable housing in the upper city, while the new eparchial buildings were under construction. The military governor was sent 1,094 rubles for the construction of the archbishop's house, but an additional order also made clear that if costs exceeded the amount sent, then governor's local treasury was to make up the difference. Moscow likely wanted to prevent price gouging of local builders, and made sure of this by making the governor aware the local treasury was responsible.¹⁴⁶ The archbishop relayed his experiences in the lower village and in the surroundings Siberian villages and towns to Moscow in no uncertain terms.

The tsar's officials wrote back to Kiprian in April 1622 acknowledging the archbishop's continuing concerns about the Tobol'sk governor and his immoral living. They assured him that actions would be taken to correct the governor's conduct:

...a decree was sent to M. M. Godunov addressing him, his companions, the *deti boyarskii*, service men, and all others living in Siberia, that [the tsar] has heard of his deplorable behavior, and that he is too often dead drunk; and it is also known that Nikita Kochet and his men have stolen from the [archbishop's] church, that they did not take off their hats, they have rebelled openly in church service, and that M. M. Godunov speaks badly of the archbishop in his presence and in the church yard. Our archbishop has attempted to stop the thievery of Boyar Godunov and his companions, but he does not listen to advice, and does not stop the bad conduct of his own men. Even the priest at the Sofiia church acts disgracefully with the governor and his men, but the governor does not stop it.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 15.

¹⁴⁷ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 23. This correspondence represents one of the few replies that does not concern land and the need for land or requests for financial support.

Unsatisfied with either Moscow's knowledge or lack of concerted action, Kiprian further complained about the irreligious and debased life of the Russians in Siberia:

...they walk around without crosses and eat every filthy thing, live among the local tribes [*inorodtsy*] in sin with the wives of Kalmyks, Tatars, and Voguls; commit incest by marrying their sisters and cousins, and fornicate with their own mothers and daughters; they rent out or sell their wives to other people, shamelessly living and fornicating with them until their husbands buy them back.¹⁴⁸

To the Archbishop, Russians not outwardly identifying as Christians led directly to immoral sexual practices. If Russians chose not to recognize the moral standards of their religious and social community, then they could freely adopt local customs of indigenous populations, who had different dietary and sexual practices.

Presumably, Governor Godunov's behavior continued since Kiprian continued to write about it in letters to the patriarch and tsar. On at least one occasion the governor and his men attempted to stop the letters from reaching Moscow and intercepted the archbishop's courier, and turned him back to Tobol'sk.¹⁴⁹ Kiprian requested that the tsar send investigators to Tobol'sk, and as a result of their ongoing embittered relations governor Godunov transferred. His replacement was Boyar Urii Suleshov. It seems that the new governor and the archbishop were able to establish good working relations, or at least an understanding about the moral propriety Kiprian was determined to oversee among Orthodox believers in Tobol'sk and Siberia.

Kiprian and Women

¹⁴⁸ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 20.

Among Kiprian's complaints of sexual misconduct in Siberia, he also wrote to Moscow that both women and girls complained to him of assault and rape. He implored the Patriarch's assistance:

...These service people come to me in an uproar, telling me they can do whatever they want because they have a decree from the tsar. Even the boyar and military governor M. M. Godunov with his companions and military men claim the tsar permits this.¹⁵⁰

Kiprian was clearly interested in the welfare of the women in Tobol'sk and elsewhere in Siberian settlement towns for reasons of moral impropriety and the physical health of the community. Moreover, as an Orthodox clergyman, the archbishop responsible for the behavior of his co-religionists. Thus, he reported conditions to the tsar and patriarch, and requested support and funds to correct immorality and the debasement of women. His reports also detailed other irregularities. There were not enough priests for the baptism of children, and many had died without receiving the sacrament. Many others died of starvation and other causes with no one to give them last rites. Kiprian does not mention the marriage rites specifically, but he was obviously concerned with the state of Orthodox marriage and the practice of concubinage. He was concerned with sin, crime, and the behavior of Orthodox Cossacks and other male servitors toward *all* women, making no distinction between Orthodox and non-Orthodox believers.

In regard to monasteries, and monastic life, Kiprian noted that many institutions lacked an abbot or *stroitel'*.¹⁵¹ Often monastic churches had no choir or priest to read the liturgy. Men and women who identified as monks and nuns in many cases continued to live in their homes with their husbands and wives. Even when they had moved to monasteries, they lived under the

¹⁵⁰ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 18.

¹⁵¹ A builder or *stroitel'* did oversee the actual construction of the monastery, but often was a monk that served as an interim administrator until an abbot was appointed.

same roof in churches and infledgling monastic spaces. To shore up the churches and monasteries, he sent abbots and church personnel he had brought with him to the existing monasteries and other gathering places. He began his project to reestablish religious order with the separation of monastic men and women at the five existing monasteries in the towns of Verkhotur'e, Tiumen, Tobol'sk, Berezov, and Turinsk. He also ordered the building of monasteries where Orthodox people were congregating in the countryside, and sent elder monks and priest-monks to the original (old) Vvedenskii monastery on the Neiva River and to the Preobrazhenskii church on the Nev'ia River.

The tsar confirmed all of Kiprian's plans by ordering the military governors of these towns and districts to use their treasury funds to supply the monasteries with cash and bread stipends, land, hay, fishing rights, and whatever else they needed.¹⁵² This created an additional drain on the governor's treasury. Governors tended to consider these monies and profits to be their own, but in fact they were state funds. Thus, this order caused tensions between state and church officials—a situation that continued long after Kiprian had departed. The monasteries and convents were expected to become self-sustaining after a time, but cost of the initial funding and the disruption of frontier exploits riled many governors and others who believed they had free rein far away from Moscow.

While Kiprian and succeeding archbishops appealed for support from Moscow, they also pursued an agenda to elevate their own status as spiritual agents of Orthodoxy in Siberia. They viewed themselves as responsible for the spread of Orthodox institutions and belief, and spiritual renewal of Muscovy itself. As Isolde Thyrêt explicated, early Siberian churchmen sought to distinguish Siberian conquest as a special project outside of the Muscovite imperial agenda,

¹⁵² Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 13-14.

casting the Siberian land as “a special place where the Christian redemption drama was playing itself out in real time.”¹⁵³ Kiprian’s *Sinodik of 1622* connected Cossack Ermak and his men to a holy mission as representatives selected by God and not the tsar. It described a spiritual rather than political conquest, and by association the archbishops assumed their own unique role as arbiters in the ecclesiastic mission in Tobol’sk.¹⁵⁴ In attributing to the Cossacks low social rank, sacrifice, and lack of mercenary interests, Kiprian was equating the Cossacks of his time and other Orthodox inhabitants with past spiritual heroes. The archbishop’s message in the *Sinodik* projected the superiority of Christian belief and the special role of the common Orthodox believer, while instilling the fear of God for licentious behavior or errant Orthodox practice.

Thyrêt confirms how the *Esipov Chronicle* of 1636, written under the auspices of Archbishop Nektarii, toned down the polarizing rhetoric of Kiprian’s *Sinodik*. It did not depict Muslim Tatars and indigenous pagans (*poganye*) as entrenched enemies of the Cossack conquerors, but instead revealed native Siberians as redeemable.¹⁵⁵ By extension, all inhabitants of Siberian lands were redeemable. Thyrêt points out that the spiritual aura of Siberia could also flow towards Muscovy and offer “an opportunity for spiritual renewal for the entire Orthodox Russian community.”¹⁵⁶ The newly baptized native populations were connected to Muscovy and could receive and bring spiritual renewal because of their connection to Siberia. I would augment Thyrêt’s analysis to add that the Orthodox believers already in Siberia were also redeemable. Indeed, they were Archbishop Nektarii’s primary focus in the *Esipov* chronicle, and perhaps the primary recipients of redemption.

¹⁵³ Thyrêt, 601.

¹⁵⁴ Thyrêt, 589.

¹⁵⁵ Thyrêt, 600.

¹⁵⁶ Thyrêt, 606.

Seventeenth-century church men from European Russia seeking to influence and correct errand behavior, popular practice, and superstition of its co-religionists appealed to the destined sacred spaces of Siberia where previous sins could be absolved through the proper observance of Orthodoxy, and subjugation to God's (read the Russian Orthodox Church's) will. As a minority Christian population in a land of non-believers, the Orthodox in Siberia were likely told of their unique service to God, the possibility of their own redemption, and their responsibility to take part in a higher mission, and live according to church cannon law, if they were to prosper in a harsh frontier. Thyret notes that the *Esipov Chronicle* compares native Siberians to Israelites, who placed another god before the true God following their exodus from Egypt. To build on Thyret's formulation, people from European Russian resettled or exiled to Siberian lands as a punishment can also be historically linked to the Israelite captivity in Babylon and later diaspora for idolatry similar to the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt followed by their deliverance. Certainly, the rhetoric about Russians being the New Israel was pervasive in Muscovy.¹⁵⁷

Thus, Siberian hierarchs considered Muslims, pagans, and non-conforming Orthodox believers all as part of God's plan for salvation in the unique historical space of Siberia. The inclusion of Orthodox believers in the redemptive plans of God allowed for the church to accept popular religious practices that it could not immediately alter, but could form and implant in a process of exchange over time. The process of becoming Orthodox Christians or properly-observing Orthodox Christians was folded into an overarching agenda of accommodation and selection of newly established forms of Siberian Orthodoxy. The providential land and people of

¹⁵⁷ Daniel B. Rowland, "Moscow-The Third Rome or the New Israel?" *The Russian Review* 55, No. 4 (1996): 591-614.

Siberia were integrated with the Orthodox faithful of European Russia because of their unique spiritual status.

IMPLANTATION OF ORTHODOXY

Orthodoxy was implanted from above as an economic and social institution with the arrival of Archbishop Kiprian, but it initially grew from the ground up, and took a variety of forms in the process of growth. The specific process of how this occurred in convents on the Siberian frontier will be the purpose of subsequent chapters on monastic spaces. Here it is important to note the conditions and circumstances that influenced the particular formation of monastic institutions in contested spaces, and the general practice of Orthodoxy on the Siberian frontier.

Monasteries in Russia had for centuries conveyed religious, social, and historical identity for the Russian state. When analyzing the role and purpose of monastic life for its members, the religious goals of church hierarchy, and the economic needs of the state in European Russia, historian Marie Thomas notes that:

Each monastery was a multi-faceted institution: as an historical and social entity, it had a life of its own, separate from that of its inhabitants. This was true through time, because the monastery (or convent) remained when the monks passed away. It was also true at any given moment, because contemporaries were able to distinguish the separate enduring institution from the community within it. They also understood that a complex institution served a complexity of needs.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Marie A. Thomas, "Muscovite Convents in the Seventeenth Century," *Russian History*, 10, Pt. 2 (1983), 231.

The same held true in seventeenth-century Siberia. The issues that church hierarchs grappled with at the Stoglav Church Council in 1551--Christian practice in daily life, and the demands for monks to lead a less secular life, and the removal of secular officials from ecclesiastical affairs—continued to be issues a century later. This continuity illustrates the vexing, cyclical nature of combating popular belief and instituting formal religious practice. Monastic reform addressed at the *Stoglav* Council in 1551 concerned the landed wealth of monasteries, but also the idiorhythmic life of monastics that imitated secular social patterns, in which monks and nuns preserved their own incomes, built the own cells, and retained their own clothing.

The program adopted at the Church Council of 1551 aimed to increase the power and authority of archbishops over morally lax clergy, and to stamp out irregular belief and practices among Orthodox people.¹⁵⁹ The reform Kiprian instituted when he arrived in Tobol'sk as archbishop pursued the virtually same objectives. The practices of convents and monasteries addressed in the sixteenth-century reforms primarily speak to the prosperous inhabitants and institutions that were large landholding estates, whereas in seventeenth-century Siberia Kiprian was apprehensive about conditions of moral and material poverty, and the lack of landed estates for the church. As institutional Orthodoxy spread to new regions, the continual process of supervision and reform followed, albeit 70 years later. A key concept in understanding the complexities of monastic life during the seventeenth and eighteenth century in Siberia is acknowledging the existence of separate, yet simultaneous, ground-up movements that determined individual monastic practice, and top down initiative that created monastic institutions.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22-23.

Kiprian was interested in curtailing popular practices that did not follow church doctrine. Yet, he likely understood the reality that religious influences flowed in both directions and had influenced the development of Orthodoxy in Siberia, as it had in other parts of Russia. Eve Levin has pointed out that the situation between popular and elite religion in early modern Russia was neither “a two-sided conflict with religious traditions,” nor the “church using Christianity as a tool of social control,” but rather a multilayered interaction of beliefs about the surrounding natural and social world.¹⁶⁰ Kiprian aimed to rectify order by adhering to church doctrine, but also drew on his own experience with combating charismatic non-conforming monks and nuns and popular rituals among the people in his native city of Novgorod.

The need to correct individual conceptions of Orthodox practice in Siberia initially fueled church and state responses that sought to institute order to monastic practice. At the same time establishing convents and monasteries on the frontier would serve the larger needs of the state. The situation in Siberia shows that in a complex frontier setting, which demanded the need for reform of individual practice, while providing the state with a geographic and economic entity. Its inhabitants were culturally, economically, and politically bound to the state, and religiously tied to the church. Newly acculturated imperial subjects did represent a challenge, but it was a familiar challenge of Russian geographic expansion and interaction with indigenous populations.

Spiritual Missions

The institutional spread of Orthodoxy in Siberia through its spiritual missions should also be understood in a specific way. Churches and monasteries established by the Russian Orthodox

¹⁶⁰ Eve Levin, “*Dvoeverie* and Popular Religion,” 40. Levin corrects the identification of popular religious practices as irregular rather than “pre-Christian” The practices that scholars often have labeled as “pagan” recorded in Stoglav weren’t actually pagan at all, but rather a variety of Christian observance.

Church in the seventeenth century sent and maintained the support of clergy in order to maintain faith among co-religionists, in other words Orthodox believers separated from their traditional environment in European Russia. In the eyes of church leaders, Orthodox believers need positive examples and clergy who followed prescribed liturgical practices and canon law. Spiritual missions sent out from ecclesiastical centers in European Russia and Siberia answered the need for order, fortifying the faithful as well as policing immoral influences associated with schismatics (*raskolniki*) and non-believers (*inoversty*). The term “spiritual” or *dukhovnaia* was applied to distinguish these ventures from diplomatic missions, but in fact these church mission did fulfill the goals of negotiating territorial acquisition and allegiance of native populations to the state. These spiritual missions were often initiated by the metropolitans of Siberia, and launched from the Siberian imperial capital in Tobol’sk. Church and state authorities in the capital endorsed Siberian initiatives in order to expand the influence of Russian rule in imperial borderlands that were loosely held.

After the establishment of the Tobol’sk and Siberian Eparchy in 1620, metropolitans frequently received correspondence from fledgling churches and monasteries its eastern territories asking not only for financial support, but also in telling of irregularities in belief and practice and asking for guidance. In order to gain a foothold spiritually and otherwise, metropolitans requested from the state lands for monasteries and churches. The state granted those lands, and yielded to requests for them to be populated and defended. The initial population for those monastic lands were local native populations newly converted to Orthodoxy. They were integrated with thin numbers of settlers from European Russia.

The spiritual missions in Siberia of the late seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century to Dauria and Kamchatka had the stated goals of spreading and reinforcing Orthodoxy.

Many Old Believers had been exiled, or had unofficially migrated, to the regions by and beyond Lake Baikal. By the 1680s, they had increasingly concerned the tsar and church officials in Moscow. Consequently, the Tobol'sk metropolitan dispatched a group of twelve church representatives to Dauria. The first Russian Orthodox mission in Transbaikalia operated from 1680 to the early 1730s. On February 22, 1680, Tsar Feodor Alekseevich and Patriarch Ioakim signed a decree sending the Daurskii Spiritual Mission out to the Selenga River, with the goal of “the calling of non-believers in the bosom of the orthodox faith, also to correct the souls of Russians who were lost in sin, and the eradication of the profligates of the holy faith of Christ.”¹⁶¹ The decree contained the order to build on the river Selenga a monastery to serve as a missionary center; it was also provided with money and church instruments and equipment.¹⁶² Thus, the stated reason for missionary activity in the Central and Eastern Siberia was the large number of non-Christians among the local population, as well as the significant number of Old Believers.

Abbot Feodosii had founded the Temnikov Sretenskii (Sanaksarskii) Monastery in 1669, along with eleven other clergy from the monastery, who traveled from Moscow and arrived in Tobol'sk in May of 1680.¹⁶³ The abbot and the other elder clergymen assigned to the Dauria mission had worked among the native Mordvins on the middle Volga, and likely spoke some native and Tatar languages, or at least had experience with new converts to Orthodoxy. Prior to their departure, metropolitan Pavel instructed them that:

¹⁶¹ *Akti Istoricheskii*, Vol. 5, No. 69, 102.; Also see *PSZ* for orders issued on 22 Feb 1680.

¹⁶² RGADA, f. 199, G. F. Miller's portfolios, op. 2, d. 481. part 1, l. 121.

¹⁶³ Meletii (Iakimov, Mikhail Kuz'mich), *Drevnie tserkovnye gramoty Vostochno-Sibirskogo kraia (1653-1726) i svedeniia o Daurskoi missii, sobrannye missionerom arkhimandritom Meletiem*, (Kazan: Univ, tip., 1875), x.

After arriving in Dauria, in Selenginsky and in other Daurian townships and fortresses, go to the non-believers (*inovertsy*) of every kind, calling them to the true Orthodox Christian faith, teaching from divine scriptures with all care and zeal. Diligently baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and lead the non-believers to holy and godly ways, without vainglory and pride, with a pious intention, without any bitterness ... so that from these words the obstinate non-believers will not be excluded from God and the holy cause is not turned away.¹⁶⁴

In November 1681, the tsar and the patriarch even considered the possibility of establishing an eparchy “in Dauria,” but the creation of an ecclesiastical district was not included in the list of royal proposals to the Church Council of 1682.¹⁶⁵ The Church Council decided to establish a new department in Siberia in Eniseisk, but it did not actually materialize until 1861. The Church Council of 1682 also decided:

from distant cities on the Lena, that eparchy was to send to Dauria archimandrites and abbots or even priests, ... but now it is not convenient for the bishops in those far cities to send such [persons] to teach the Christians law and enlighten the infidels for the sake of the Christian people because of the scarcity of clergy.¹⁶⁶

The mission to Dauria succeeded in building the Troitskii men’s monastery on the Selenga River by 1690, as well as the Posolskii men’s monastery in 1699 on a bluff overlooking Lake Baikal at the site the defunct fortress of Ust-Prorva, where the graves of Russian emissary E. Zabolotsky and members of his embassy were killed on October 7, 1650.¹⁶⁷ The dangers of

¹⁶⁴ Meletii, 42.

¹⁶⁵ *Sobranie gosudarstvennikh gramot i dogovorov khraniashchikhsia v gosudarstvennoi kollegii inostrannykh del*, t. 4, (Moscow: Tip Selivanovskii, 1826), 395.

¹⁶⁶ *Akty Istoricheskii*, Vol. 5, No. 69, 101-102.

¹⁶⁷ *Provoslavnaia Entsiklopediia*, Vol. 14, 217-219. <http://www.pravenc.ru/text/171434.html> accessed November 23, 2018.

local Buriat tribes and Mongolian cross-border raids left these two monastery as lone outposts in the region, while ecclesiastical administrators remained in Eniseisk. Abbot Feodosii remained at the Selenginskii Troitskii monastery an additional twelve years, and then returned to Moscow in 1692. Metropolitan Pavel verified that the mission was successful in continuing to baptize many non-believers (Buriats), and had established an economic and agricultural center near the border with China. However, in 1718 the Selenginskii Troitskii monastery was seized by Buriat tribesmen who chased off the monastery's herd of horses and cattle; and burnt most of the buildings, including the mill, churches and cells to the ground. The remaining building with all monastery records caught fire in 1728 and the site was abandoned.¹⁶⁸

Spiritual missions in far eastern Siberia (1743), China (1712), and the Northern Caucasus (1743) continued into 1760s. The Kamchatka Spiritual Mission of the 1740's was the last mission within the Asian continent to be orchestrated from the Tobol'sk Eparchy until later in the nineteenth century, although missions such as the one to Alaska in 1783 originated elsewhere in Siberian space. The early attempts of securing the loyalty of multiethnic, multi-religious, non-Russian subjects using a program of rapprochement with the Russian people and Christian culture was formalized and expanded in nineteenth-century imperial Russia. Through programs of Christianization - preaching, establishing schools and seminaries, and creating translation of catechism and liturgical books into native languages - the government favored instituting Orthodoxy among pagans and Muslims as a reliable way to legitimize imperial rule, while reinforcing order through Orthodoxy among ethnic Russian population outside of European Russia and during the social and economic dislocation of emancipated serfs in post-1861 Russia.

¹⁶⁸ Meletii, xii.

Although sometimes compared to the Roman Catholic embassies in the sixteenth century and used as evidence of the borrowing of western examples in Russia, these spiritual missions served a different purpose. The overt interest in souls of unbelievers was sometimes proclaimed in appeals for clerical support, but the Russian Orthodox Church showed little interest in proselytization before 1725 for practical political reasons and social realities.¹⁶⁹ Early modern Russian state policies towards non-believers often shaped an inverse relationship of tolerance -- allowing the celebration of religious rites without state interference but not necessarily freedom of conscience.¹⁷⁰ The contradictory nature of policies on religious toleration toward schismatic Old Believers in the seventeenth century can be seen in Simeon Polotskii's the *Scepter of Rule* (*Zhezl pravleniia*) published in 1667.¹⁷¹ While Polotskii's tract became a standard work on church schism, its tone varied from hostility towards heresy to measured appeals to heretics for moderation and seeing the errors of their ways, and to return to the "true" church.¹⁷² The willingness of the Orthodox Church to allow schismatic members to return to the "true" faith displayed a degree of tolerance, but only when believers submitted to the authority of the church. This approach of exhortation and prospect of redemption was also extended to the newly baptized and errant Orthodox in Siberia.

Similar to the practical considerations of state formation in early modern Russia, the political circumstances in eighteenth-century imperial Russia reflected periods of religious toleration during times of social unrest, and intolerance during times of relative stability once the

¹⁶⁹ Bushkovitch, "Orthodoxy and Islam in Russia," 117-143.

¹⁷⁰ Gary M. Hamburg, "Religious Toleration in Russian Thought, 1520-1825," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Summer 2012): 515-559.

¹⁷¹ Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia*, 163-72.

¹⁷² Gary M. Hamburg, *Russia's Path Towards Enlightenment: Faith, Politics, and Reason, 1500-1801* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016), 195-196.

state had some modest success. Under the expansion and settlement of imperial territories east of the Ural Mountains the Russian Orthodox Church in Siberia and the Far East leveraged their position, status, and landed wealth established a century earlier to widen the spread of Orthodox influence. Monastic institutions held territory and compelled the loyalty of new converts to the church, initiating a social process of acculturation to the empire. Native elites often swore oaths to the tsar on based motives of economic expediency, and often later revoked assurances of fidelity for reasons of imperial duplicity and local exploitation. Yet, conversion of native peoples to Orthodoxy allowed for an additional form of legal control over subject peoples. Where influence and control of the Siberian frontier was weakly held by imperial administration, jurisdiction of local church hierarchies served imperial interest to compel settlers' and native populations' compliance with moral and legal order.

Metropolitan Filofei

In 1702, Peter I appointed Filofei Leshchinskii as Metropolitan of Tobol'sk. Filofei was the Stefan Iavorskii's choice; Iavorskii was the de facto head of the church, filling the administrative role of the vacant position of patriarch. He became known as "the enlightener of Siberian pagans."¹⁷³ He oversaw the conversion of some forty thousand indigenous Siberians to Orthodoxy. It is not clear if this disciplinary institution was part of Filofei's conversion mission, or if his conversion mission was the result of the new provincial inquisitors. In addition, he was concerned with the ongoing defiance of self-immolating, schismatic Orthodox sects in Siberia.

¹⁷³ Nikolai Abramov's assessment in his biographical study, "Filofei Leshchinskii, mitropolit Tobol'skii i Sibirskii," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosvesheniia*, ch. 52, no. 12, 1846. Through the early research of N. A. Abramov lived and worked as a teacher in the Tobol'sk region and studied the Tatar language. Through the research and efforts of Abramov and local historian P. A. Slovtsov in the nineteenth century the administrative records of the eparchy and local government in Tobol'sk have been preserved.

He also established the first Slavonic-Russian school in Tobol'sk (1703), bringing Kievan churchmen to Tobol'sk as instructors.¹⁷⁴ Filofei oversaw a complicated mixture of increasing archiepiscopal infrastructure in Tobol'sk and Siberia and conversion campaigns. He carefully monitored of the growth of monastic institutions. Under Filofei, the number of churches throughout Siberia grew from 160 to 448, yet monastic institutions remained the same at 37.¹⁷⁵

Filofei's tenure as metropolitan ended in 1711 with his retirement to Tiumen as an ascetic monk (*skhima*), supposedly because of his poor health. Perhaps he stepped down because his patron, Stefan Iavorskii, had lost Peter's favor. However, soon afterwards he departed on missionary travels throughout Siberia. Peter recalled him to serve again as metropolitan of Tobol'sk in 1715, and he returned reluctantly, and only in 1719.

Filofei's efforts to "enlighten" native peoples glorified the rule and dominance of the Russian state on the Siberian frontier, but Filofei's motivations may not have been to spread the institutional reforms of Peter's church, but to escape them. In current scholarship, Filofei is positioned as an early "founding father" of Tobol'sk with little regard for the amount of surveillance, litigation, and coercion involved in maintaining confessional fealty to Orthodoxy in

¹⁷⁴ Viacheslav Safronov, *Kulturnoe Naselenie Sibiri*, (Ekaterinburg: Uralskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 2008), 572; and *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 79-85. At this time the Tobol'sk Eparchy stretched from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, until it was divided into two smaller eparchies in 1721 with the establishment of Irkutsk as a separate eastern Siberian eparchial center. So, the number of churches and monasteries is relatively small for the landmass of Siberia.

¹⁷⁵ There is speculation about Peter I allowing the construction of the Nerchinsk Uspenskii monastery in 1706, and some anecdotal account give date of 1712 and 1717. Nineteenth century historians P. A. Slovtsov and N. A. Abramov count the monasteries and convents at 37, and Irina Man'kova's research accounts (see Chapter Five) for 36 monasteries in the seventeenth century, so it is possible this monastery was founded in the eighteenth century despite Peter's aversion to monastic institutions. The Znamenskii Abalatskii monastery was also formally established in 1783, further complicating the actual number in later accounts.

Siberia.¹⁷⁶ In Tobol'sk alone, there were numerous cases of native women abandoning their newly baptized husbands and returning to their communities, as well as native men taking multiple wives after Orthodox baptism.¹⁷⁷ So, the reality after conversion was less than ideal, and in addition to the persistence of Orthodox sects the attempts to institute conformity and homogenize religious practices on the Siberian frontier caused disruption rather than quelling it. Metropolitan Filofei's legacy of conversion set the stage for further intrusion and scrutiny of Siberian settlers, native peoples, and monastery personnel.

The Extension of Ecclesiastical Regulation – 18th-Century Inkvizitsiia

Metropolitan Filofei was directed to establish the *inkvizitsia* as Peter's representative in Siberia. The *Inkvisitsiia*, or Inquisition, was formally established as a disciplinary organ under the church reforms of Peter I as a program to ensure provincial compliance with sanctioned church practices and to identify unsavory religious-political elements in society. It lasted until 1764, when Catherine II abolished it as part of her church reforms.¹⁷⁸ The *Inkvitsiia* in Siberia came into existence in 1723 under Metropolitan Filofei as a judicial and investigative body at the disposal of the Tobol'sk Eparchial court. It was tasked with monitoring the adherence of newly baptized Christians and Orthodox Christians suspected of schismatic belief.¹⁷⁹

The limited previous scholarship of the *Inkvizitsiia* as a judicial body or disciplinary organ in eighteenth-century Russia has conflated the suppression of political and religious non-

¹⁷⁶ Safronov, *Kulturnoe Naselenie Sibiri*, 571-574.

¹⁷⁷ Abandoning husbands - GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 72, *Delo o turinskom novokreshchennom tatarine Vasilii Puksheneve*, 1743, ll. 1-3; f. I156, op. 1, d. 341, *Delo o novokreshchennykh iz raznykh religii*, 1748, l. 3, 8; Bigamy – GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. d. 63, (1743) *Delo o Turniskom kolodnike Makare Trubine*, 1743, ll. 1-18;

¹⁷⁸ *PSPR*, t. 1, (1721) No. 22, (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tip., 1879) 41-42. Order for the selection of monastery personnel for the establishment of two offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and one in each eparchy throughout Russia.

¹⁷⁹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 75 (1723).

conformity in Russia with the burning of heretics during the Spanish Inquisition of the fifteenth century.¹⁸⁰ These accounts are inaccurate, decidedly polemical, and ideologically driven.

However, the existence and activity of the *Inkvizitsiia* does substantiate some claims of overt surveillance by Synod and Tobol'sk officials, which reinforced imperial policies to search out and report on subjects of questionable loyalty.

On December 23, 1721, the Holy Synod issued orders appointing Hierodeacon Pafnutii of the Danilov monastery in Moscow as the Chief Inquisitor or *Protoinkvizitor*, and all eparchies throughout Russia were ordered to establish a panel of provincial inquisitors.¹⁸¹ The Holy Synod issued another order on March 31, 1721, augmenting the original one, directing each provincial inquisition to appoint six monks, and send a representative of that body to Moscow to personally receive instructions from the Chief Inquisitor.¹⁸² The metropolitan had the authority to appoint inquisitors from any monastery in the eparchy, but the members of the provincial inquisition (functioned independently, and were obliged to report only to the Chief Inquisitor in Moscow.

The inquisitors in the provinces did identify many schismatics and those who propagated superstitious belief and practices within Orthodoxy, but its actual purpose was to function as an internal investigative body within the church itself. The inquisitors in the provinces were rewarded for information, even if they could not wholly enforce Peter's Spiritual Regulation. With the establishment of the Holy Synod in 1721, all the metropolitans were reminded of their oath to the tsar acknowledging their subordinate position, and the inquisition was to be the eyes of the state in the provinces.

¹⁸⁰ E. F. Grekulov, *Pravoslavnaia inkvizitsiia v Rossii*, (Moscow: Akademiia Nauka SSSR, Izd. "Nauka," 1964), 19-20.

¹⁸¹ *PSZ*, t. 6, No. 3870, (St. Petersburg, 1830), 467-476.; *PSPR*, t. 1, No. 22, (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tip., 1879), 41-42.

¹⁸² *PSPR*, t. 1, No. 56, (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tip., 1879), 83.

In June 1721, the Synod gave further instructions for the distribution of provincial inquisitors. One was to take up residence with the local civil authorities to manage their salaries, which came from fines levied against Orthodox believers for failing to fulfill their annual obligation to attend confession. Two or three were to live at the archbishop's house in quarters appropriate to a high-ranking monk. Two were to be available for travel between the province and Moscow. Therefore, the Synod ordered that reliable, local priests needed to be appointed as inquisitors to replace the two inquisitor monks traveling to Moscow.¹⁸³ The final inquisitor was based at a monastery in the province chosen by the bishop.

Metropolitan Filofei named the Dalmatov Monastery as the site for the monastery-based office of the Inquisition. Because the limited personnel of the Dalmatov men's monastery had responsibility for maintaining the operations of the Inquisition, they must have had little attention left to devote to the monastery's own operations. That left the daily operation of the joint men's monastery and women's convent in the hands of abbess and sisters.

SIBERIAN ICONOGRAPHY

The cults of icons in Russian Orthodoxy often arose amid episodes of strife and uncertainty in the history of the Russian state. The icons represent the restoration of order and the physical and spiritual recovery of individuals or the broader community of believers. Icons carried not only spiritual and theological meaning, but also religious and national identity for Orthodox believers in imperial Russia.¹⁸⁴ The most venerated icons were connected to

¹⁸³ *PSPR*, t. 1, No. 151, (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tip., 1879), 206-207.

¹⁸⁴ Vera Shevsov, "Petitions to the Holy Synod Regarding Miracle-Working Icons," in *Orthodox Christianity in Imperial Russia: A Source Book on Lived Religion*, Heather Coleman, ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 229. Accessed March 6, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

apparitions (*znamenie*) involving the appearance of the Mother of God, and reflect her in various images. The cults of most miracle-working icons arose in specific geographic locations such as Vladimir, Kazan, and Smolensk, or even the Siberian villages of Abalak, Tabynsk, and Chimeevo. In general, icons embody the divine in the world. They serve as believers' prayer to the image of the holy figures depicted, and of the divine intercession through the medium of the holy figures to believers. Certain icons gained a reputation for being particularly effective conduits. Believers attributed miracles, usually of healing, to them and they became the center of their own cults and thus the focus of pilgrimage.

Most miracle-working icons in premodern Russia were revealed by very ordinary people, and very often by women or young girls. The development of a cult surrounding an icon usually eventually attracted the attention of religious as well as secular authorities. Local devotees wanted the recognition of their icons by the archbishop, patriarch, and tsar because usually that came with a donation to build or upgrade the shrine, thus allowing the accommodation of more visitors. Copies of an icon shared their essence with the original, including the potential to be miracle-working. The presence of one icon could establish a network of shrines and thus a web of Orthodox sites across the landscape. Often these shrines became gathering places for schismatics by the third quarter of the seventeenth century, and church and state authorities became very suspicious of them. A few suspicious cults were closed down before the end of the seventeenth century, and Peter I and Empress Anna in particular strove to eliminate veneration they labeled as superstitious.

Lay religious experience was at the heart of establishing veneration for the miracle-working icons of Abalak, Tabynsk and Chimeev of the Trans-Urals and Western Siberia. As Vera Shevsov assessed in her study of specially venerated icons in late nineteenth-century,

"common believers," that is men and women from all socioeconomic backgrounds, experienced religious life outside the mediation of clerical officials.¹⁸⁵ Thus icons represented multifaceted relations of power and identities among individual believers, their local community, and church and state authority. These special icons exuded the internal struggles of the communities who "found" and "dreamt" them while reflecting their personal claims of authority. Miracles and tribulations icons themselves experienced reflected the socio-political strains as well as aspirations of those who experienced the miracles and those who were drawn to venerate the icon.¹⁸⁶ A need to reinforce the spread of Orthodoxy rather than curtail local features of miracle-working icons led church and state authorities to appropriate individual religious experience to shape and promote to forms of Orthodox belief on the frontier. A mixture of local and national forms, the frontier miracle-working icons became a part of individual and communal experiences tied to its history and identity. As in other spaces and period of Russian history, the veneration of local icons moved from individual experience to collective religious concern, which brought experience of the periphery to the center, and extended to the Russian nation.

The Abalak Icon of the Mother of God

The Abalak icon of the Mother of God originated in the Tatar village of that name when a pious widow, Mariia, reported visions and miracles from the Mother of God. The clergy in Tobol'sk, including the archbishop, joined with her to get the icon painted in accordance with her vision, and to facilitate the building of the church in Abalak as a way of identifying the place of its appearance as Christian space. As in the case of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God, the

¹⁸⁵ Vera Shevzov, "Miracle-Working Icons, Laity, and Authority in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1861-1917," *Russian Review*, vol. 58, no. 1 (Jan. 1999): 27-28.

¹⁸⁶ Shevsov, 33.

Abalak icon marked the establishment of Russian Orthodoxy amidst a “newly baptized” land, and it became part of the conversion effort, of the land if not of the people. At the same time, however, this cult grew from the ground up, originating with ordinary peasants rather than with the church hierarchy. When the icon became famous, then both the archbishop in Tobol’sk and the local population in Abalak wanted to possess it.

In 1635, to Mariia, an ordinary village woman, announced a vision of the Mother of God accompanied by St. Nicholas and St. Mary of Egypt. She stated that the vision had occurred the previous summer. Mother of God, Mariia said, directed her to tell of her vision and speak out publicly—something otherwise women were discouraged from doing. Specifically, the Mother of God commanded, according to Mariia, that the community to build a church in the Abalak churchyard, and dedicate it to the Novgorod Znamenie Mother of God Icon. Mariia clearly was already familiar with this specific miracle-working icon, probably from copies she had seen. In keeping with the traditional formulae of such visions, Mariia did not heed the saints and the Mother of God three separate times, risking her own life and the lives of others.

What likely actually occurred was that local clergy were resistant or indifferent to her pestering demands about the dilapidated church. She perhaps represented others in her community who desired a new church, and the priest for some reason was resistant to the project. Frustrated that her demands were falling on deaf ears, Mariia decided to invoke divine authority. As an assertive matron of the community, she warned them that if they did not go down the hill and cut the wood for the new church and start building it, God would inflict his anger on them, and their priest would die, along with the “best” people of the parish. Essentially, she was threatening violence, but not at her own hand, but through divine retribution. To drive the point

home, Mariia told her priest that Saint Nicholas appeared again in physical form, and literally twisted her arm, and she fell to the floor. Unmoved by the drama, the priest put her off again.

So Mariia went to Tobol'sk to Archbishop Nektarii and pressed for the building of her church. Once again, she claimed a direct message from divine figures threatening dire punishments on the people if they did not comply. The archbishop was more responsive than the local priest. An archdeacon of the Tobol'sk Sofiia cathedral painted the icon reflecting Mariia's vision. The archbishop authorized the building of the new church in Abalak, contingent on the financial assistance of residents of Tobol'sk. Mariia was able to gather funds for this purpose, and she returned with the Znamenie icon. This exchange created a connection between the residents of Tobol'sk and Abalak, and elevated the status of Abalak as a place of Orthodox pilgrimage, bringing visitors and financial support to the village.

The narrative of the origins of the Abalak icon provides hints about how Mariia was able to gather the funds. It describes the first healing miracle from the Abalak Mother of God. A peasant named Evfimii who fell ill, and a beggar told him to visit Abalak, where a church was being built in honor of the Znamenie Mother of God, St. Nicholas, and St. Mary. If he promised to pay for the painting of an icon, God might heal him. Evfimii did so, and gradually he began to feel better. The painting of an icon was an act of piety in exchange for healing, as persons who received miracles were expected to pay for them.¹⁸⁷

The account of the origin of the Abalak icon thus provides two different stories about how the physical image came into being. Was it painted by the archdeacon in accordance with the archbishop's instructions, or was it painted at the behest of the peasant man Evfimii as an act

¹⁸⁷ Eve Levin, "P(r)aying for a Miracle," *Association for the Study of Eastern Christian History and Culture, Eighth Biennial Conference*, Arizona State University, Tempe, February 21-23, 2019.

of gratitude for his healing? Both stories could be true. Perhaps Evfimii paid for the archdeacon's artistic services. But an alternative explanation is that Mariia wanted to take the icon from her vision from Tobol'sk to Abalak, and probably local people in Tobol'sk did not want to give it up, especially after Mariia revealed it to be miracle-working. So Evfimii crafted the compromise. He arranged for the painting of a copy, so that both locations could possess the icon; copies also shared the miraculous essence of the original. The archbishop's act of blessing the icon confirmed his authorization of the cult that was emerging among ordinary people.

Evidence of that the Abalak Icon of the Mother of God was a regular part of local processions is revealed in the narrative through additional miracles stories. While enroute to Abalak, the icon was credited with another healing, of a girl who had been blind for two years. And in 1665, the Abalak copy of icon was brought to Tobol'sk to alleviate flooding caused by too much rain. The procession connected the places through which the icon passed in a sacred web. Annual reenactments reinforced ties between the communities. It was an occasion in which divine power came to the people rather than the people going to the loci of divine power. The power of the icon was manifested through the claims to miracles that occurred along the way.

Despite these attempts to share possession of the icon between Abalak and Tobol'sk, controversy continued as to which community had the greater claim to the original icon. In Tobol'sk, they kept asking for the icon to be returned, and the population of Abalak claimed that they did not deserve to have it. The new Archbishop, Kornilii, had to deal with the issue, and came up with the solution that the icon would be brought back to Tobol'sk for two weeks each year, but otherwise it would remain in Abalak. Nearly a century later Abalak was formally recognized as a holy place when a monastery was founded in Abalak to house the icon in 1783.

The Tabynsk Icon of the Mother of God

Additional miracle working icons can serve as examples of the implantation of Orthodoxy in the Trans-Ural area as well as Siberia. The miracle-working icon of Tabynsk Mother of God that appeared in a haystack near the village of Tabynskii (near present day Chelabinsk), and the Chimeev Kazan icon of the Mother of God that was discovered flying down the Niiap River near Kurgan on the eastern side of the Urals.

The first appearance of the Tabynsk Icon of the Mother of God occurred most likely between 1594 and 1597. The legend recounts how Hierodeacon Ambrose was walking in the evening from haymaking, past a salty spring, when he heard a voice telling him to “Take My icon.” Considering these words to be an evil suggestion, he tried not to pay attention. On the third day, passing in the same place, he again heard an unearthly voice again: “May the orthodox brethren of this blessed abode, take Me to the temple of My Lord.” He looked and saw on the large stone—three meters on each side-- the shadow of a large wooden icon of the Mother of God. This stone hovered over two springs, one of which was salty, the other sweet. The hierodeacon bowed to the icon and ran to the monastery. The brothers carried the icon back with honor and singing and placed it in the church. But in the morning the icon was not found. They began to search and saw it on the monastery gates. The monks again returned the icon to the church, but in the morning, it was again in its original place. Then they decided to build a chapel over the gate and they began to pray to it.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ E. N. Poselianin, *Bogomater': opisanie eë zemnoï zhizni i chudotvornykh ikon*. (Moscow: Otdykh Khristianina, 2002), 441.

Such stories of the surprising find of an icon in a particular location, at a spring, on a tree, on a stone, are typical of the genre. How did such icons get to those places? As in the case with the Abalak icon, individual reasons prompted the miraculous finding. More likely, someone put the icon there to be found. Sometimes, icons were left in such places by monks who intended to claim that place to build a hermitage and later a monastery, but did not return there. But in this case, it was probably the hierodeacon himself, wanting to declare a miracle in order to generate community support. That would account for the icon “miraculously” returning to the site where the deacon wanted to build a chapel.

This icon, too, spurred controversy over its possession, as the miracle tale recounts. The icon was transferred to the brothers in another monastery, first west to Kazan and then east to Ufa, but it refused to stay in those locations. Instead, it again appeared on the stone back near the monastery outside Tabynsk. In other words, the icon was first brought from the Trans-Ural area to European Russia, along the commercial route, which went to Kazan. How did this happen? Possibly the monks brought it on their visit to Kazan and Ufa, to raise money for their new chapel. Often when new miracle-working icons were proclaimed, the archbishop who had jurisdiction—at this time, the archbishop of Kazan—would have the icon transferred to his cathedral; it was a way of consolidating spiritual power. But obviously the local community did not intend to make a present of their miracle-working icon to the archbishop of Kazan. So they claimed that “the icon” wanted to go home, so they stole it back.

All of this became known to Tsar Feodor Ioannovich, and he presented new lands to the Archbishop Germogen to found the Prechistenskii Monastery. This piece of information suggests that the actual reason that the icon traveled to Kazan was to seek the backing of the archbishop for the founding of a monastery. Of course, the granting of lands depended upon the tsar. Given

Tsar Feodor's well-known piety, it was completely possible that he would be impressed by the story of the miraculous icon. However, in general decisions made in the name of the tsar did not necessarily reflect his personal involvement. But the support of the tsar and the archbishop were essential to providing the monastery with the lands it needed to be economically viable.

The story of a second appearance of the Tabynsk icon in 1765 presents a different picture of quotidian Orthodoxy in Siberia. The legend describes how three Bashkir shepherds—the Bashkirs being Muslim--were grazing their cattle at the salty keys when they saw on the stone an icon of the Mother of God. They rushed to chop it with an ax, saying: "This is the Russian God" and split the icon into two parts. For their sacrilege, shepherds were struck blind. They began to cry and pray: "We will not leave until the Russian God heals us." The youngest Bashkir among them, aged 14–15, prayed and received his sight, so that he led his comrades to a salt spring. And predictably they also repented of what they had done to the icon Mother of God, washed their eyes with salt water and received healing. Since then, the water in the spring was deemed to be holy.¹⁸⁹ This story is typical of the genre of miracle tales—scoffers are punished and they recover when they repent. Yet the sincerity of these spontaneous conversion is questionable.¹⁹⁰ According to the tale, the first young Bashkir was baptized, and subsequently led an especially ascetic life; dying at the age of 130 during the Tabynsk icon procession to Cheliabinsk.

Although many details of this story were exaggerated if not invented, the account was designed to depict plausible actions and idealized behaviors. While the Bashkir's age is certainly

¹⁸⁹ V. Sergeev, *Istoriia Tabynskoi ikony Bozhei Materi*, (Ufa: Agios, 2004), 21-23.; E.V. Kamaleev, A.T. Akhatov, "Russkaia Krepost' Tabynsk i ego okrestnosti: k voprosu o kolonizatsii tsentral'noi chasti Bashkirii v XVI-VIII vv.," *Vestnik Akademii Nauk Respubliki Bashkortostan*, Vol. 22 (1) 2017: 20-28. For additional information on the history of the Tabynsk region see V. N. Kurmaev, *Ocherki istorii Tabynskogo kraia: s drevneishikh vremen do nachala XX veka*, (Ufa: Konkord-Invest, 1994).

¹⁹⁰ Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*, 1-16.

exaggerated, the lesson that piety and asceticism would lead to long life would resonate with the audience. Further, there is likely an element of truth to the account of the conversion of a Bashkir boy. It is possible that Bashkir boys would vandalize an icon, given traditional Muslim hostility to the depiction of holy figures. Perhaps he and others actually did convert, and were lured away from their own Muslim community, while the rest of the Bashkir community did not. The discovery of icon, attempts at its destruction, and the conversion story should be read in more mundane terms.

Initially, the Bashkir pastoralists did not accept the land claims of individual monks or nuns desiring to expand their territory. They were likely angered by the intrusion and claims, but once negotiations began, and when either force was threatened, compensation offered, or when settlers migrated and began living on the land, they had little choice except open conflict. For local churchmen, the conversion story and the tale of a miracle working icon cemented their claim because it was not only their desire to inhabit this place, but that of the Mother of God herself. As non-Christians, the Muslim Bashkirs did not recognize Mary as the Mother of God, but venerated her as the Mother of Jesus (in fact she is the only woman mentioned in the Quran by name). The churchmen leveraged the authority of the Mother of God to stake their claim, realizing that it would carry weight even with the Bashkirs.

The story is emblematic of a likely real situation, in which Bashkirs resented the icon as a manifestation of a claim of property. This icon was not physically the same object as the one already in the monastery, but rather a copy. It was placed on a stone to represent a claim to ownership of that property by an ecclesiastical body—probably the monastery. So the Bashkirs resisted the claim. The story is intended to claim not only Christian truth but also to make the conversion of Bashkirs the result of an act of God, and therefore nothing that the Bashkirs could

contest. The process of conversion in this period was often a process of religious hybridity. Bashkirs and other Turkic-speaking peoples first nominally embraced Christianity, and venerated saints along with mullahs, and over time built a community of faith that identified as Tatar Orthodox Christians.¹⁹¹ Concerns over the mixed religious practices would occur later, but the initial aim in the placement and discovery of the icon was to expand confessional and territorial claims of Orthodox peoples inhabiting Bashkir lands.

Another community also became connected with the icon—the Bogoiavlenskii factory workers. They also wished to possess it, and their claim was contested by the village of Tabynsk. The legend described how the inhabitants of the Bogoiavlenskii factory began to worry about the cattle and ran to the salt keys, where they found a miraculous icon, which they recognized from older miraculous accounts. They took the icon to their factory church, but in the morning, they found it gone; it later turned up in the village of Tabynsk.

The Chimeev Kazan Icon of the Mother of God

The Chimeev Kazan Icon of the Mother of God appeared in the eighteenth century in Chimeevskii settlement, located 90 kilometers from the Western Siberian town of Kurgan. The first mention of settlement was in 1681 when a family by the name of Chimeev settled on the bank of the Niiap River, a tributary of the Tobol. Chimeev was a convict, and it is not certain why he and his family were sentenced to hard labor (*katorga*), but when the sentence ended, he

¹⁹¹ Agn s Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 8-10; also see Matthew P. Romaniello, "Mission Delayed: The Russian Orthodox Church after the Conquest of Kazan," *Church History* vol. 76, no. 3 (September 2007): 511–540; Werth, "Coercion and Conversion," 543–570; Janet Martin, "Multiethnicity in Muscovy: A Consideration of Christian and Muslim Tatars in the 1550s–1580s," *Journal of Early Modern History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001): 1–23.

decided to stay east of the Urals. Soon, other people began to join him and eventually a settlement was formed in his name. The regional authorities assigned it the status of a free artisanal settlement (*sloboda*).

According to local legend, the icon of the Mother of God was found in the waters of the Niiap River, a tributary of the Tobol.

Some children playing on the river bank spotted a large board floating against the current. When it hit a whirlpool, they saw on the board an image of the Mother of God, with eyes burning with unnatural light. The children fetched the priest and the adult villagers, who retrieved the icon and placed it in the village church, dedicated to Sts. Constantine and Helena.¹⁹² This story exhibits the motifs characteristic of the genre: the appearance of the icon in an unlikely place, but one with water; the manifestation of signs and wonders; the innocent, naïve finders; the transfer of the icon to a church. Also, in keeping with the norms of the genre, the icon rapidly became the focus of veneration. The first episode in the tale closed with references to believers who made Chimeev their pilgrimage destination.

At the same time when the icon was first found, another miraculous phenomenon happened not far from Chimeevo in a pine forest. Residents noticed the appearance of a spring, which began spurting from under a hill. It was considered “miraculous” because the Chimeev district was known for its poor quality of the water due to its many swamps. Since its discovery the inhabitants of Chimeev and visitors claimed the water to possess healing qualities, alleviating both physical and emotional infirmities. The appearance of the spring was quickly associated with the arrival of the miracle-working Chimeev Kazan Icon of the Mother of God; miracle-

¹⁹² “Iavlenyi Chudotvornyi Kazanskii-Chimeevskii obraz Bozhe Materi,” <http://chimeevo.ru/zhizn-monastyrya/yavlenyj-chudotvornyj-kazanskij-chimeevskij-obraz-bozhiej-materi/>.

working icons in general have a propensity for association with sources of water. Seemingly, the Chimeev founders had cleansed their crimes through hard labor in the swamps, and for their trouble they were awarded with a miraculous icon. Instead of being known as a group of exiles, the Chimeev settlement was now a place of pilgrimage known for its miracle-working icon, and healing spring.

The second episode in the tale also replicated the typical motifs. In 1770, the wooden church housing the icon burned down. Although the fire completely destroyed the iconostasis, the Chimeev icon miraculously survived. A child pulled it from the ashes, unharmed but for singeing in the upper corner. The church was rebuilt four years later. This story connected Chimeev and the icon with the powerful Dalmatov monastery; it credited Abbot Margarit as the cleric who consecrated the new building.

The Initial research reveals there is no scholarly writing on the Chimeev Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, and Evgenii Poselianin's nineteenth-century compendium of does not account for "Chimeev" among the Kazan attributed icons in Trans-Ural lands or Siberia.¹⁹³ Numerous elements are reminiscent of the popular cult of Saints Ioann and Iakov Meniuzhskie, two young innocents venerated in the Russian north following their martyrdom in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.¹⁹⁴ The occurrence of innocent children-at-play and, or "innocents" with miraculous revelations, activities leading to the building of a monastery, and the development of a site of pilgrimage illustrates ordinary people's religious experiences the practice of popular religion, which were later embraced by church hierarchy. The manifestation of this cult connects children with the former exilic community's desire to be associated with purity and innocence.

THE SPATIAL-GEOGRAPHIC AND HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Churches, monasteries, and even roadside chapels reveal the spatial-geographical hierarchy that reflects the desires of ecclesiastical institutions to implant hierarchical relations on the frontier. Yet, the conditions were less than ideal. Church officials not only had to contend with several decades of popular practice among Orthodox believers and the newly baptized, and the cultures and beliefs of the indigenous peoples and Tatars, which often influenced the secular and ecclesiastical communities. The organized building of Church infrastructure – ecclesiastic residence and consistories, monasteries and convents, as well as churches and cathedrals – served as religious centers and visible markers of Russian Orthodox culture on a vast frontier dominated by Muslim and pagan belief. Churches consolidated communities of lay Orthodox believers, which were often associated with monasteries. Monasteries in turn consolidated the clerical orders as well as the church's economic presence. The layered spatial relations of these social institutions mirrored “center-periphery” relation in the wider Russian empire. When describing monasteries, churches, and icons, Siberian authors could not necessarily copy previous sources and descriptions, as these objects were new local items and infrastructures. Yet, there were many of examples of early sources available to them about how to describe the founding of a monastery, how to describe the transfer of a monastic community from one place to another, how to recount the creation or the discovery of a miracle-working icon and development of a cult around it. The result was a mix of the worlds of center and periphery. The particular development of Russian Orthodoxy in Siberia is manifestly visible in art and artifacts represented in iconography.

Orthodoxy developed as a common religious practice at a grass-roots level, first among explorers and Cossacks, and then by settlers populating the frontier. Influential hierarchs then

constructed institutions to serve as centers of economic, political, and social activity that enabled the building and maintenance of the Russian Empire. Undoubtedly, early settlers and service people brought notions of hierarchy in secular and spiritual life, which also influenced their descriptions of a growing frontier, yet they were also free to give descriptive details in a non-prescribed way. The sources that recount these activities reveal a variety of aspects of the deeper cultures of the empire

Textual sources describing the construction of Siberian monastic areas provide a local picture of fledgling religious institutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also display how these institutions were essential in forming and replicating Russian imperial culture. Valerie Kivelson's examination of local map-making in Siberia showed how local Siberians perceived themselves in their own environment and distinctly imprinted their own individual conceptions while undertaking the project of imperial expansion.¹⁹⁵ Kivelson shows how cartography is instrument of power to control and claim land, where confessional dominance of Orthodoxy was unconcerned with conversion of native populations in Siberia. The replication of monastic communities, and iconography based on models from European Russia but distinctly Siberia in form and content was another avenue for the state to project power through sanctioned ecclesiastical institutions. The Church provided a moral foundation of power with the goal of keeping the Orthodox properly behaving and observant. Conversion of non-Russians to Orthodoxy was often incidental, and done for pragmatic purposes of both the church and the native population on the multi-religious Siberian frontier. In the face of settler exploitation of indigenous peoples, rampant sexual immorality, and unsanctioned marriage the Church

¹⁹⁵ Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

employed conversion and religious discipline among its believers to facilitate the presence of Orthodoxy in a dominant multi-religious frontier.

CONCLUSIONS

Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the methods of church hierarchs used to implant Orthodoxy transitioned from acculturation to assimilation. The reach of the state in an expanding empire of the eighteenth century is evident in the tasks and duties assigned to monks and nuns at Dalmatov, yet the establishment of monasteries in Siberia followed patterns of settlement and interaction of northern Russian territories. This was not the imagined, romanticized past of the “Russian Thebaid of the North,” but rather the ecclesiastical imperialism that continuously claimed indigenous lands, fought off or negotiated with local tenants and owners while waiting for official church recognition, and if needed, requested military support of the state.

CHAPTER 4 - ECCLESIASTICAL IMPERIALISM: LAND ACQUISITION

This chapter will be devoted to examining church land acquisition through the establishment of monastic spaces in the seventeenth century. Previous scholarship on the Russian empire in Siberia does not address the overt role of the Russian Orthodox Church in empire building until Peter I's eighteenth-century policy of forced integration of native peoples.¹⁹⁶ Consistently, these scholars have focused on military conquest, the co-option of native elites, and the heavy hand of military governors as the tools of Russian state-building in the seventeenth century. The Russian Orthodox Church is relegated to a secondary role as the legitimizer of empire in the seventeenth century and proselytizer in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Religiously, monastic spaces served as a cultural symbol of the state. Economically they supported peasant communities and villages for state income and military recruits. Defensively, they provided fortified permanent outposts on the frontier. Paradoxically, while military governors were transferred or rotated to other posts for the specific purpose of not creating fiefdom, the Muscovite state allowed the church to establish landed estates that expanded its wealth, power and influence. The willingness of the state to limit secular authorities, and empower ecclesiastical authorities indicates the nature of the Russian church in society in the seventeenth century.

The church rhetorically propagated the religious function of Orthodox institutions as a legitimizing, moralizing and civilizing element in Russian territorial expansion, while expanding its estates. Siberian lands in the seventeenth century represented enormous potential economic,

¹⁹⁶ Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, 20; Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multi Ethnic History*, (London: Pearson Education, 2001), 31; Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 73; Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 161; Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, 61, 79; Hartley, *Siberia: A History of the People*, 131.

and financial resources for the church, significantly greater than in other parts of Russia. The Church sought to establish the boundaries of correct Orthodox practice and belief, which among other foundational principles upheld and reinforced the sovereignty of Russian rule over its territories and its constituent subjects. Church personnel wanted to capitalize on the wealth and possibilities of Siberia, resembling in this the Cossacks, merchants, and *promyshlenniki* - Russian and indigenous Siberian contract workers and townsmen who came to the frontier to make money any way they could. Unlike the rest, they believed that they had God on their side. As the landscape was marked as both Russian and Orthodox the church was able to persuade the state to grant lands, and then expand those lands at rates that far exceeded lands granted to or held by state servitors. Lands granted to secular servitors were relatively small, and land maintenance was transitory or non-existent either based on terms of state service, lack of peasant tenants, or preference for trade and commerce. In comparison, ecclesiastical presence and expansion provided long-term stability.

I argue that church and state relations regarding expansion and legitimization were not always symbiotic, but often the church in lieu of the state was the engine of empire for territorial expansion in Siberia. In the seventeenth century, the church in Siberia was the arbiter of state authority for aggressive expansion. In order to continue the expansion of land holdings of the church, peasant families from newly established settler communities and indigenous populations were designated as an economic service population in monastic lands. The peasant families functioned as an economic unit, and the contributions of women and children were vital to establishing communities that produced income to support the growth of monastic lands. What follows below serves as a general description of how the Russian Orthodox Church gained lands on the Siberian frontier, and the economic relations it created with the Russian state, as well as

settler and indigenous communities, in which women were key members in transforming the Siberian frontier.

THE SIBERIAN EPARCHY

With the establishment of the Tobol'sk and Siberian Eparchy the state sought to influence the development of vast resources of land and its people to serve the needs of territorial expansion. The tsar granted lands to the Tobol'sk Eparchy with the obligation to establish settlements and villages for agricultural use. The church functioned as a purveyor and organizer of settlements connected to their lands. The regional military governor provided for security, collection taxes on ecclesiastical, state lands, and fur tribute. The Siberian Chancellery was headquartered in Moscow, construction, while its service people in Tobol'sk provided administrative support for judicial, supply and transportation and clerical duties needed at the administrative center of Siberia. Secular officials were granted lands for their personal use with a limited number of quit-rent tenants, but monastic lands made up the majority of territory claimed by the Muscovite state in the seventeenth century. This situation appears to have organically developed under the orchestration of Kiprian beginning in the 1620s and continued under his successors in the Tobol'sk Archbishopric, until 1649 when the Muscovite state legally restricted the church expanse of monastic estates throughout its territories. Kiprian, as the first Archbishop of Siberia, leveraged the actual and exaggerated reality of the exploitation of women to call for the building of monasteries and convents. The tsar and patriarch obliged until 1649 when new edicts limited the rights of ecclesiastical institutions to claim new lands, except by special permission from the tsar. This new law did not actually cause church institutions in Siberia to cease their activities, and when secular officials found out, the new church lands were sometimes confiscated by the state.

A decree sent to the Tomsk military governor in 1678 reiterated the orders of the 1649 Law Code. It specifically addressed the Tobol'sk Eparchy, warning, "the archbishops in all Siberian towns, and the archimandrites, abbots, and builders, and monks are not allowed to take or sell lands of service people, or other people, or Tatar or Ostiak lands, their hay fields or any other resources without the permission of the of the sovereign...and this will be strictly enforced."¹⁹⁷ Monasteries and women's convents were also forbidden to take in wandering peasants, non-tax paying peasants, or purchase *iasachnye liudi* (tribute-paying people). Military governors, as the secular representatives of the state, observed the economic growth and the challenge the church represented to their secular authority in Siberia, and communicated their complaints to Siberian Chancellery in Moscow.

In addition to land, the Eparchy also sought and received mining rights east of Urals. Church institutions over time were assigned more roles in economic development, rather than less. In the early seventeenth century, secular officials were tasked with making lands productive; later, following Moscow's establishment of the Siberian Archiepiscopate most new land development was assigned to monasteries. In the 1660s, the secular authority—the military governor—was placed in charge of developing mining.

Two examples illustrate how mining rights were distributed in practice. In 1682, ore was discovered at the Dalmatov Monastery. The monastery was put in charge when Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich authorized the Tobol'sk Governor to grant mining right to them.¹⁹⁸ But when mining of ore began in 1699 near the Nev'iansk monastery, Peter I granted permission not to the

¹⁹⁷ Shorokhov, 64-65.

¹⁹⁸ *Dopolneniia k Aktam Istoricheskim*, t. 10, No. 122, 20; GAKO (SH) f. 224, op. 1, d. 5, *Rozysk zheleznykh rud na reke Zhelezianke, otvedennoi vo vladenie Dalmatovskogo monastyria, 1682*, 5 ll.

monastery but instead to Tula munitions industrialist Nikita Demidov and his son Akinfii.

Although Tula was located in European Russia, the Demidovs established the metallurgical foundries in the Urals. In 1704 Akfinfii Demidov established his industrial dynasty in the Urals and Siberia, and he opened nine foundries and munitions factories between 1717 and 1735. Peter the Great did not assign the development of new metallurgical operations to ecclesiastical institutions, or even to his own governor, but rather to a private, non-noble citizen. Peter diversified the avenues of economic development, effectively replacing the privileged economic position of the Orthodox Church in Siberia.

The issue of the conflicting interests of the church and the state in regard to land possession can be traced back to the fifteenth century. Previous generations of scholars posited a conflict between advocates of land possession and opponents of land possession among the clergy, but in reality the difference was merely one of emphasis, reflecting concerns about greed.¹⁹⁹ But the state was increasingly concerned about land being donated to the church, because then it ceased to produce the same level of income for the state. Consequently, tsars issued a series of edicts limiting the church's acquisition of privately held lands. But the situation out in Siberia was different than in the central provinces in European Muscovy; there were immense tracts of land, rather than a shortage. Under these conditions ecclesiastical institutions continued to expand their landholdings, while the military governors reported these violations of the law to the authorities in Moscow and the authorities in Moscow demanded that church institutions in Siberia were required to obey the law.

INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

¹⁹⁹ Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia*, 15-17.

During period of conquest in sixteenth-century Kazan as well as in seventeenth-century Siberia, policies regarding monastic peasant populations varied to meet local conditions. In the Kama-Volga lands, the church could not hold lands occupied by Orthodox peasants because they were assigned to military servitors. As a result, non-Russian villages were assigned to monasteries, and *iasachnye liudi* (tribute-paying people) and semi-pastoralists became their labor source. Thus, monasteries had a direct financial interest in maintaining the confessional diversity, rather than in converting the population. Sometimes native villages sought and gained support from the state in land disputes with their monastic overlords, but the relationship was not entirely benevolent.²⁰⁰ In Siberia, policies regarding monastic peasant populations also adapted to local condition, but differed from the Kama-Volga regions west of the Urals. The confessional and ethnic composition of settlers or rent payers on monastic lands was mixed, and prohibitions against incorporating land settled by people professing Orthodox belief did not apply to Siberia. The majority of monastic lands were settled by so-called free peasants who presumably professed the Orthodox faith. *Iasachnye liudi* also inhabited lands owned by church institutions, but after 1649 monasteries were prohibited from accepting payments in kind, or rents, in *iasak* (tribute, usually in furs and fish) from them.²⁰¹ It was in the interest of the church to limit settler exploitation of native populations, so that the church or state could control them for their own economic purposes. When peasant inhabitants of monastic lands came into conflict with *iasachnye liudi* and other native peoples, the church urged “peace and restraint.” Yet the church claimed the contested lands as its own, and urged military governors to rein in the

²⁰⁰ Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire*, 153-155.

²⁰¹ Shorokhov, 65.

incursions by natives trapping and fishing on its lands.²⁰² Land disputes and hostilities also occurred between monasteries and the so-called “*starozhily*” of Siberia, persons who had migrated to the northern border lands of Russia and Siberia in the late sixteenth-century, who were sometimes indistinguishable from native inhabitants.²⁰³ The encroachment of monasteries and convents into native or otherwise occupied lands resulted in a footprint for Russian rule, but often distressed the local inhabitants and authorities.

MONASTIC LANDS

Essentially, upon arrival in Siberia Kiprian began sending petitions to the tsar asking that existing settled lands and its peasant populations be granted to the church, specifically to him at the archiepiscopal house and the Sofia Cathedral in Tobol'sk. While in Vekhotur'e in 1621 and before arriving in Tobol'sk, the archbishop had requested and secured 200 *desiatins* of land (approximately 500 acres) on the Nitsa River near Tiumen for eight peasant families who accompanied him to Siberia. In 1623 he asked for and received an additional 200 *desiatins* from the tsar.²⁰⁴ Simultaneously he founded the Tavdinsk (Tara) settlement, and petitioned for lands from Tobol'sk to Tavdinsk along both sides of the Tavda River, which stretched 250 kilometers south east near present day Omsk. Kiprian's request was fulfilled and his settlers were also allowed to occupy Tatar lands “the island where [Siberian] Khan Kuchum had resided,” and by 1625, 16 households were established with 22 peasants.²⁰⁵ In 1622, he petitioned the tsar again,

²⁰² G. N. Aiplatov and A. G. Ivanov, *Monastyr'skaia Kolonizatsiia Mariiskogo Povolzh'ia*, (Ioshkar-Ola: Mariiskii gosudarstvennii universitet, 2000), 27-31.

²⁰³ A. A. Liutsidarskaia, *Starozhily Sibiri*, 53.

²⁰⁴ P. N. Butskinskii, *Zaslenie Sibiri i byt pervykh eia nasei'nikov*, (Kharkov: Tip. Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1889), 122-123. Butskinskii's data is based on accounts from 17th-century archival documents collected by G. F. Miller in the 1730s during the Second Kamchatka Expedition.

²⁰⁵ Butskinskii, 124.

stating that, “by your order I have come to Siberia, to the Sofiia Ascension Cathedral in the city of Tobol’sk, but I have no patrimonial lands or [state] peasants, or tax-free peasants from the devout sovereign...may the tsar grant the Russians freely living in Siberia...”²⁰⁶ The archbishop was granted the peasants, 53 *chetverti* (quarters) (66 acres) of plow lands, and meadowlands large enough to produce 400 stacks of hay along the Irtysh River in Tobol’sk. When Kiprian left Siberia in 1624, the grain-producing patrimonial lands of the Sofiia Cathedral and the archiepiscopal house had more than doubled to 177 *chetverti* (220 acres). Under his successor, Archbishop Makarii, the church in Tobol’sk also added four villages to its holdings in 1625, with over 50 acres of grain-producing lands and 230 acres of meadow lands. Later archbishops were obligated to report the significant income derived from the lands held by the Tobol’sk archiepiscopal house, which resulted in a cut to the Sofiia Cathedral’s stipend from 609 rubles to 321 rubles in 1636; it was completely eliminated in 1638. When Archbishop Nektarii complained of the “meager supplies of bread” to the tsar in 1642, the Tobol’sk stipend was restored.²⁰⁷ As of 1640, the settlements and patrimonial lands of the church in Tobol’sk, Tiumen, Turinsk, Verkhotur’e, and Tavdinsk (Tara) totaled for 427 male peasants, yet archbishops continued to petition for grain and cash support from the tsar. It appears that low grain production was due to poor harvests in the Siberian climate and the inadequate number of peasant households to work the vast amount of church lands. Kiprian and succeeding archbishops likely distributed the original lands granted by the tsar in the 1620s to the 1640s to monasteries and convents in the eparchy. Monasteries and convents established after 1640

²⁰⁶ Butsinskii, 125; He cites the “*Spisok s perepisnykh knig votchin tobol’skago i sibirskago arkhiepiskopa v 1625 g.*”

²⁰⁷ Butsinskii, 129.

largely relied on the initiative of the founders or their kinship ties, as in the case of the Dalmatov Monastery, which will be considered later.

Kiprian initiated land acquisition beginning in the 1620s, and his successors in the Tobol'sk Archbishopric continued it until the 1649 Ulozhenie of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich restricted the acquisition of all monastic lands throughout Russia. The Muscovite state legally limited the economic independence of the church, and instructed that it could no longer claim lands on their own, without a decree from the tsar ("*bez gosudareva ykazu*"). Correspondence sent to military governors in Vekhotur'e and Tomsk in 1670s reiterated the restrictions on the church, because monasteries continued to illegally claim land, either on their own initiative or with the connivance of church authorities in Tobol'sk.²⁰⁸ When lands, peasants and native labor was claimed without state permission, the military governor, acting "in the name of the tsar," ordered that it be returned.²⁰⁹ Thus, the church was prevented from extending its land claims, but ultimately the state benefitted.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the church held over twenty percent of the peasant population in Western Siberia, that is 5,645 free male peasants, and eight percent of the land or 7,293 *desiatins* (19,700 acres) of grain producing land in Siberia, and 78 villages or settlements. By the mid-eighteenth century, the numbers increased to 11,980 free male peasants, 15,570 *desiatins* (42,000 acres) of grain lands, and 165 villages and settlements.²¹⁰ The amount of patrimonial lands in Eastern Siberia were less impressive – at the end of the seventeenth century

²⁰⁸ Shorokhov, 65.

²⁰⁹ Shorokhov, 65.

²¹⁰ Shorokhov, 8, 61. The author cites archival sources - Siberian Chancellery records at RGADA, and Tobol'sk Eparchy Records at GATO in Tobol'sk; also published 19th-century Tobol'sk church journals, and the work of P. N. Butskinskii, D. N. Belikov, V. I. Shunkov, and others on monasteries and landholding in Siberia.

the church held 1500 *desiatins* (4,053 acres) of grain lands, 787 free male peasants, and 37 settlements and villages; by the mid-eighteenth century the number increased to 3,850 *desiatins* (10,400 acres), 3071 free male peasants, and 69 settlements and villages.²¹¹ The lands claimed by the church that subsequently reverted to state control is unknown, but it was likely a considerable amount based on the growth of church lands prior to 1649.

THE FOUNDING OF DALMATOV MONASTERY: ECCLESIASTICAL IMPERIALISM IN PRACTICE

The history of the Dalmatov Monastery is connected with the expansion of Russian lands through monastic colonization in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in the Trans-Volga regions of Zavolzhoe and Pomor'e, as well as the Urals and Siberia. The founding of monasteries and convents are often connected to nineteenth-century veneration of the "Russian Thebaid of the North," which compared monastery-building in the region of Vologda and Belozersk with the settlement of ancient Christian monks and hermits in the desert region of Egyptian Thebes.²¹² The authors of the Russian Thebaid incorporated Siberian monasteries into this monastic continuity from early Christian ascetics. Just as monks and nuns of the fourth and fifth centuries ventured into the upper and lower in the Nile River valley of Egypt establishing coenobitic communities and eremitic isolation, so did early Russian monastic communities establish themselves along the Volga river valley, and spread to the forests and steppes of Siberia. But this depiction was highly stylized and it did not reflect the reality of Russian monasticism of the late medieval and early modern periods.

²¹¹ Shorokhov, 62.

²¹² For further mention see, A. N. Murav'ev, *Russkaia Fivaida na Severe*, (St. Petersburg: Moskovskoi Dukhovnoi akademii, 1855); I. K. Smolich, *Russkoe monashestvo 988-1917*, (Moscow: Izd. Pravoslavnaia entsikolopedia, 1997).

The narrative paradigm of wandering in the wilderness and then settling down into monastic communities veiled the more mundane expansion of Russian lands further east. The saint-monks who established major monasteries in rural areas in European Russia in the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries— St. Sergei Radonezhskii, St. Aleksandr Svirskii, St. Kirill Beloozerskii, for example--marked the landscape with physical structures and communities of Russian Orthodox followers. The founders of monasteries in the Russian North and in Siberia behaved similarly. The pious accounts make little distinction between those who fled society for ascetic reasons those who were directed by church and state hierarchs to establish religious communities, and others who fled to avoid persecution. The religious figures who supposedly sought solitude to pray did not remain isolated from the world for long, as most of them accepted monk-acolytes. In order to gain support from the church hierarchy and gain official recognition, the founder had to succeed in establishing a monastery with a group of monastics. That process often failed; abandoned churches and monasteries were not uncommon in outlying regions. Even when successful, the process of establishing an ongoing monastery often took some 20-40 years. Additionally, monk-settlers claimed “empty” lands in both European Russia and Siberia that typically were actually inhabited. The local populations often protested about the monastery taking over their land, sometimes even driving out the intruders. The local population was not objecting to Christianity per se—sometimes they were themselves Christian—but to usurpation of their property rights.

Many monasteries grew around military outposts and fledgling towns on the frontier, and expanded their land holding through negotiated or forced occupation of native lands. The tsar then confirmed the monasteries’ claims to the land, and encouraged them to use indigenous peoples, exiles, and wandering landless peasants as monastic laborers. Beginning as small

communities with simple infrastructures the Dalmatov Uspenskii monastery and Vvedenskii convent—a joint institution with male and female compounds serves as an illustration of the religious and political establishment of Russian rule in western Siberia during the mid-seventeenth century. The establishment of the Dalmatov monastery in Western Siberia, east of the Ural Mountains, illustrates how native lands were seized, and transformed by ambitious churchmen and state servitors, and how their personal initiatives were sanctioned ultimately reinforced the aims of expansion and settlement of the Russian empire.

Around 1644, Dmitrii Mokrinskii, a Russian servitor who later transformed himself into monk Dalmat, laid claim to lands that would eventually accomodate the Uspenskii Monastery and Vvedenskii Convent. He was the son of Ivan Mokrinskii, a Cossack chieftain who served in several Siberian cities. His mother was either newly baptized Siberian Tatar or Ostiak. In 1627/28, the Mokrinskii family was transferred from Berezov to Tobol'sk, and Dmitrii Mokrinskii entered the ranks of state services as a *syn boyarskii*, a low-ranking military servitor. By 1628, he had become a Tobol'sk servitor, and in 1633 he assumed the position of clerk at the Vagai outpost southeast of Tobol'sk. After the death of his wife in 1642, he left his family of five children and his position in state service, and took monastic vows under the name of Dalmat at the Nev'iansk Epiphany monastery in the Verkhoturskii district, on the far western boundary of the Tobol'sk Eparchy.²¹³ He left the Nev'iansk Epiphany Monastery two years later to establish a monastery on the banks of the Iset River at the Techa River, at a settlement known as Beloe Gorodishche on the edge of the Kalmyk steppe.

²¹³ “Dalmat,” *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopedia*, Vol. 13, November 28, 2011, 650-653 <http://www.pravenc.ru/text/168654.html> accessed on December 13, 2018.

The fertile lands chosen by the monk belonged to the Tiumen *iasachnyi* Tatar Iligei, who leased them to residents of the Nev’iansk and Irbit settlements for the fish and fur trades. The landlord, under the influence of other tenants, twice tried to run off Dalmat. Abbot Isaak, the biological son of Dalmat who replaced his father in 1666 as abbot at Dalmatov, reported that at first his father reconciled with Iligei due to the fact that “he came to him, as a Tatar, because he was kin of a sister,” saying, “But my mother was born from the Siberian Tatars from the newly baptized.”²¹⁴ The tenants did not want Dalmat and his followers to encroach on their lands and livelihood, but Dalmat made use of his ethnic origins to prevail upon the Tatar leader Iligei to acknowledge the monastery’s claims to the land based on Dalmat’s Tatar ancestry. Iligei was experienced in dealing with Russians, and he was responsible for paying the tribute to the Russian tsar. From the Tatar perspective, conversion did not invalidate kinship ties, and so Dalmat had a claim that Iligei was inclined to honor. However, Iligei also had obligations to tenants and to other Tatars to keep the property for their use as fishing and fur trapping. Likely he understood that granting Dalmat and the monastery use of the land was irrevocable, and he was reluctant to do so. Iligei finally yielded the land to the monastery in perpetuity. He needed to make the grant publicly, so that his people would know that from then on, the monastery owned the land.

²¹⁴ B. N. Karsonov and I. L. Man’kova, “Starets Dalmat: chelovek i sviatoi, Khristianskoe missionerstvo kak fenomen istorii i kultury (600-let pamiati sviatitelia Stefana Velikopermskogo),” *Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii. T. I* – Perm’, 1997, 180. Accessed on December 13, 2018 at <http://atlasch.narod.ru/>. Man’kova provides a detailed study of the origins of the Dalmatov Monastery in *Vkladnye knigi Dalmatovskogo Uspenskogo monastyria (posledniaia chetvert' XVII--nachalo XVIII vv.)*, ed. I. L. Man’kova, (Sverdlovsk, 1992). The original manuscript of the establishment of the monastery was written between 1708 and 1711, and is at the Russian State Historical Museum, Synod Collection, No. 843, 1.1-2. Because of the fires in 1707, and 1742 or during one of the many Bashkir and Kalmyk offensives against the monastery in the 1660s many of the early archival records are lost.

This grant did not end the conflicts over the land. The tenants and Tatar people living along the Iset and Techa Rivers increasingly faced monastic followers of Dalmat and other settlers encroaching upon their lands. Iligei had agreed that the monastery and its inhabitants were to stay on the south side of the river, but Dalmat decided to venture onto the north banks. He began to set up his hermitage on the higher bank of the river, which angered existing Russian tenants and indigenous populations that were trapping otter and beaver and harvesting fish.²¹⁵ With his tenants in an uproar, Iligei tried unsuccessfully to convince Dalmat to move to the southern bank of the river. Iligei had to thwart several attempts to kill Dalmat. Eventually, he negotiated an agreement between the monk, the tribute-paying (*iasachnyi liudy*) inhabitants, and the freebooters living on his lands.

In 1646 the monastery was officially granted 160,000 *desiatins* (432,000 acres) of land by the order of the tsar.²¹⁶ The year of this huge land grant followed upon two years of conflicts between the monk Dalmat and Tatars and Russians inhabiting the land. In either case, Moscow abrogated the earlier agreement between the monk Dalmat and the Tatar landholder Iligei, which restricted the monastery's landholdings to the north bank of the Iset River. The grant opened the powerful potential for development, yet with so much land and too few inhabitants it is difficult to imagine how the monastery could actually use the land. Thus, the state essentially used monastic spaces as a placeholder for future development of Siberia.

In the following decades and centuries monastic lands could expand or contract at the will of the state, which enter into agreements with local elites, as it did with the Tatar Iligei, and then revoke them and reassign territory to more reliable subjects, i.e. monasteries. All of the land

²¹⁵ G. S. Plotnikov, "Ocherki bedstvii Dalmatovskago Monastyria s 1644 po 1742," *Permskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti, Otdel Neffitsial'nyi*, No. 16, (Perm', 1869) 17-28.

²¹⁶ Shorokhov, 48. He cites figures from RGADA f. 199, op. 2, portfolio 481 (G. F. Miller).

was not suitable for agricultural use, but the purpose was to assert Russia's general claim to Siberian territories. Later, in 1734-1744, the Second Kamchatka Expedition enumerated the land holdings in Siberian territories enroute to Kamchatka, and began a process of evaluating resources and potential uses for the Russian state.²¹⁷ The areas in and around the Dalmatov Monastery, throughout the eighteenth century were frequently raided by Bashkirs, Kazakhs, and other nomadic tribes who did not accept Russian claims.

In 1651, Kalmyk nomads raided the settlement town of Beloe Gorodishche, burned it down, and captured or killed most of its inhabitants. At some point, whether during his dispute with Iligei or after the Kalmyk raid, Dalmat petitioned Tobol'sk for help, but he did not receive it until 1658. The military governor requested that Moscow send settlers from the northern Ural towns to the region.

After its initial establishment, the monastery attracted more than religious followers, and also lay settlers migrating from European Russia, and regional merchants and traders as well. Garrisons of soldiers were sent from Tobol'sk to fortify and defend the fledgling settlements against frequent nomadic incursions and local peasant rebellions.

Once hasty defenses were constructed around the monastery, Dalmatov began its tenure as a military fortification, and a symbol of Russian suzerainty on the northern boundary of the Kalmyk steppe. Paradoxically, the land that the Tatars ceded to the Dalmatov monastery became the site of a fortress to wage war against the Bashkir and Kalmyk tribes that continued raiding settlements in and around the Dalmatov monastery throughout the 1660's.

The growth of patrimonial lands at Dalmatov, designated for agricultural purposes, was also considerable from the end of the seventeenth century until the mid-eighteenth century.

²¹⁷ The vast majority of Siberian lands remain uninhabited to the present day.

Dalmatov was granted the largest amount of patrimonial land in the Tobol'sk Eparchy during this period. At the end of the seventeenth century Dalmatov had 960 *desiatins* (2,600 acres) of grain-producing land, and by the mid-eighteenth century it held 4332 *desiatins* (11,700 acres). Its peasant populations also increased nearly tenfold, from 243 to 2,156 free peasants, and its villages and hamlets from 8 to 20.²¹⁸ To put this into perspective, the agricultural lands of Dalmatov alone exceeded the monastic patrimonial land for all of Eastern Siberia by the mid-eighteenth century, which was 4,200 *desiatins* (10,400 acres). The Russian state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries relaxed the stringent policies on monastic land acquisition in Siberia because monasteries were so central to the state's interests there. As with the compromises with native elites, the Russian state negotiated terms of compliance to meet transitional goals, and then changed the playing field when strategic economic or political demands required new tactics to meet the needs of state expansion.

The authorized "free" peasants on monastery lands were obliged to pay rents on the land to the monastery in the amount of "*piatinnogo khleba*," that is one-fifth of their annual income, and were also obligated to perform labor of the monastery at grain mills, mines, or construction projects. In addition, the monastery attempted to claim rents from peasant families outside their lands when peasants married outside of monastic villages, with moderate success.²¹⁹ The majority of "free" peasants were *guliashchie liudii*, that is freed slaves, runaway peasants, town laborers, and other persons not already bound to provide labor to the state or to state servitors at specific places of residence. They labored as tenant farmers, either hired hands or as renters.²²⁰ In

²¹⁸ Shorokhov, 61.

²¹⁹ Shorokhov, 90-91.

²²⁰ B. Ia. Sharifullin, *Istoriko-lingvisticheskii slovar' trilogii A. M. Bondarenko "Gosudareva votchina,"* (Krasnoyarsk: Sibirskii Federal'nyi Universitet, 2007).

Siberia “free” peasants entered into agreements to work monastic land for three to ten years, but often their tenure exceeded 20 years due to labor and annual rent demands.

Under these conditions, numerous peasant uprisings occurred in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In December 1762, peasants from the Kurgan and Utiatsk villages refused to pay rents and perform labor, and in April 1763 they seized monastery lands and defiantly planted their own crops. The Dalmatov Monastery sent in a detachment of soldiers stationed at the monastery that captured and flogged the leader of the peasant movement. However, in June 1763, the peasants again refused to pay their rents, and in March 1764, a dragoon of soldiers from Azov had to defend the monastery when the peasants stormed its gates. After the peasants were defeated in a bloody battle, over 200 active participants were rounded up and flogged.²²¹

In the following decade peasant rebellions only increased. In February 1774, Russian and Bashkir peasants from the Shadrinsk and Okunev districts joined ataman Mikhail Razhev, a lieutenant of Cossack leader Emel’ian Pugachev. They seized the Dalmatov Monastery, and took five cannons, 500 guns, and 70 pounds of gunpowder.²²² A few months later over 9,000 of Pugachev’s forces were defeated by Russian troops near Orenburg, and by September 1774, he was captured near Tsaritsyn after his army failed to take the city. The improved conditions of lower taxation and rent-free land his peasant followers hoped for were never realized. Bashkir village leaders were also disappointed; they thought the rebellion would end Russian colonization of their lands and bring them greater political autonomy. Neither happened and the

²²¹ *Istoriia Rodnogo Kraia Zaural’ia*, ed. A. P. Grigorov, (Cheliabinsk: Iuzhno- Ural’skoe Izd., 1975), 54-55.

²²² *Permskii Sbornik: Povremennoe Izdanie*, Kn. 1 (Moscow: Tip. Lazarevskago Instituta Vostochnik Iazikov, 1859), 53-55.

material condition of peasants on monastic land remain much as they had been prior to the uprisings of the 1760s and 1770s, but the Russian state was alerted to the level of discontent in the interior of Siberia, and how ill-equipped local officials were in dealing with local insurrection.

Archbishop Afanasii of Kholmogory's Endowment of Dalmatov Monastery

As a religious center east of the Urals, Dalmatov's humble beginnings were elevated by direct association with an influential Cossack family in Tiumen through a series of events in the late seventeenth century. The son of a prominent Tiumen Cossack, Artem Liubimov-Tvorogov, took monastic vows under the name of Afanasii in 1666. In 1682 this monk became the powerful prelate Archbishop Afanasii at Kholmogory in 1682. But he had an additional connection to the eastern Urals through his mother, who took up residence at Dalmatov as a retired abbess in the 1680s.

The archbishop's relationship with the Dalmatov Monastery began in his early years, when when Abbot Isaak was his spiritual father. A year following his tonsure Afanasii was sent temporarily to the patriarch's school at the Chudov Monastery in Moscow—a training ground for future hierarchs and a center for the new, Ukrainian-style learning that the tsar and his ecclesiastical advisers favored. Afanasii returned to Dalmatov as a hierodeacon in 1668. Both he and Abbot Isaak soon found themselves embroiled in controversy.

Despite his turbulent tenure at Dalmatov, Afanasii chose to financially support the convent and monastery. In honor of his mother and his own time as the “spiritual son” of one of Dalmatov's early founders, he contributed 100 rubles to build a convent church for the sisters in 1700. That same year, he gathered an additional 100 rubles from other prominent men in

Moscow and Kholmogory who also had connections to the region, and also endowed the men's monastery.

Conclusion

Land acquisition by the Russian Orthodox Church in Siberia drew on previous imperial practices used in the Volga-Kama regions and northern territorial expansion in the sixteenth centuries, but it also had distinctive features unique to Siberia. Monastic institution that were granted lands indelibly influenced the cultural, economic and religious development of frontier society by asserting their control of Siberia not only physically, but also spiritually. Both men's and women's monasteries acquired lands in considerable quantities, whether by leveraging ownership from indigenous peoples, by gifts from individuals and families, or by grants from the Russian state. The Russian state promoted monastic land ownership in Siberia, unlike in European Russia, recognizing that the monks and nuns would ascertain their economic development. They did so primarily by recruiting agricultural settlers—peasant families.

CHAPTER 5 - MONASTIC WOMEN ON THE SIBERIAN FRONTIER

The construction and establishment of monastic communities in both Western and Eastern Siberia throughout the seventeenth century clearly illustrates ecclesiastical institutions entrenched in the expansion of Siberia. Its influence in territorial acquisition and the building of the cultural and physical infrastructures of Orthodoxy provided moral countenance to frontier populations through monasteries and churches, but also established economic networks vital to support an emerging population of settlers, and servitors. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the origins and evolution of female monasticism in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while analyzing the social conditions that drew women to religious life. It traces the implantation of Orthodoxy through female religious institutions that drew on European Russian models, but were adapted to frontier conditions in Siberia. The second part of the chapter will survey the convents founded or reestablished in seventeenth-century Siberia. Extant archival records, nineteenth-century eparchial publications, and previous scholarship offer some details on the composition, activity and events for select convents. The Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in Western Siberia was one of nine women's monasteries founded in the seventeenth century, and will be the subject of a case study in the following chapter.

Convents interacted with ecclesiastical and state authorities, as well as with dependent lay populations inhabiting monastery-owned lands and local villages and towns. These networks display how convents as institutions performed Orthodoxy on the frontier in a colonial environment. The inhabitants of convents, the nuns, personally performed Orthodoxy in ways that differed based on age, social origins, ethnicity, literacy, skills, and the circumstances of taking monastic vows. Foremost was their participation and presence as Russian Orthodox monastics beginning in the 1620s. Throughout the course of the seventeenth century, from 1604

to 1689, twenty-seven monasteries and nine convents were established in the vast territory of Siberia, and in the eighteenth century two were added to this number.²²³ Five of the nine convents were consecrated by 1625, but most existed informally, in some cases ten to twenty years prior to their official recognition. These nascent monasteries grew up at sites where women were gathered around town churches and remote hermitages. In some cases, women's and men's monasticism arose in tandem. As noted in Chapter 3, the first archbishop of Tobol'sk and Siberia, Kiprian, demanded that monks and nuns be separated for reasons of propriety. Even so, the convents often remained conjoined with the neighboring men's monasteries, even when they ended up separated geographically. It is significant that many of convents founded after 1644 were located in agricultural zones, while men's monastic activity tended to grow around the seats of power in cities and towns, or in concert with military garrisons and outposts strategically located on the frontier.

Shortly after the first archbishop of Siberia arrived in Tobol'sk he issued extensive correspondence to the tsar and patriarch in Moscow requesting land and funds to establish monasteries and churches throughout his eparchy that stretched from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. To Kiprian, the first Archbishop of Siberia and Tobol'sk, the establishment of women's monasteries or convents would provide a space that modeled Orthodoxy behavior by women and towards women in the rough Siberian frontier. Establishing correct practicing and believing Orthodox community became a priority for the Archbishop who had personally witnessed the brutality shown towards native populations, the licentious behavior of Russian inhabitants in Siberian towns and villages, and the unseemly practice of monastic men and

²²³ I. L. Man'kova, "Vozniknovenie Monastyrei v Sibirii v XVII veke: Problemy Datirovki i Chislennosti," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Istorii*, No. 47, 2017, 5-14.

women living under the same church roof.²²⁴ Once Kiprian arrived in 1621 existing convents were divided and regenerated from men's monasteries, or founded at sites where women were gathering around town churches, and remote hermitages. The convents were often conjoined with the neighboring men's monastery despite their physical or geographical separation.

Current scholarship on female monasticism in Russia focuses on the late nineteenth century as a watershed moment when women entered religious life as a vocation at an institutional level following the social upheaval at the end of serfdom in 1861.²²⁵ I argue that women similarly entered monastic life in Siberian convents as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a way to adapt to an uncertain frontier where conditions in towns and villages were socially in flux, and economically unstable, and politically volatile. Women chose religious vocations persistently throughout periods of social change of modernization, reform, and imperial expansion. Convents on the frontier were not primarily elite institutions for inconvenient wives or particularly pious women. Monastic life demanded labor, but also imparted a status of religious vocation, and state service as agents of empire in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment.

Prior to the establishment of the Siberian Eparchy in 1621, Orthodox men and women began to identify as monastics for pragmatic reasons particular to frontier life. In Tobol'sk disabled Cossack soldiers or freebooters as well as disgraced priests made up the first recognized group of "monks" who were sent to live in the lower quarters of the city in 1598.²²⁶ In early

²²⁵ William Wagner, "The Transformation of Female Orthodox Monasticism in Nizhnii Novgorod Diocese, 1764-1929, in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (December 2006);

²²⁶ I. L. Man'kova, "Dozornaia Kniga 1624 kak istochnik dlia rekonstruktsii pravoslavnogo landshata Tobol'ska," *Izvestiia Uralsk'skogo federal'nogo universiteta, Seriia 2, Gumanitarnye nauki*, tom 16, No. 3(130): 220.

seventeenth-century Tobol'sk, women who identified as monastics were primarily the wives of Cossacks and other men that had come to Siberia as military troops, administrative servitors, or were fortune-seekers in the fur trade.²²⁷ Orthodox women regularly gathered around churches built within fortresses, outposts, and fledgling communities built in the first three decades following the Cossack led defeat of the Siberian Khanate in the late 1580s. Women were often left to seek their basic needs for survival in frontier society that was continually expanding further east. Husbands, fathers and other menfolk had either perished or were absent for long periods performing service for the state or roaming with Cossack bands. Women from European Russia who had relocated with their families made up a small fraction of women on the Siberian frontier; most women were members of indigenous populations of Tatars, Ostiaks, Voguls, and Bukharans. With few families established on the frontier, destitute men and women relied upon the support of an emerging, yet transient population. Merchants, state servitors, and military troops who chose or were designated to occupy outpost towns began building nascent commercial, administrative, and religious institutions. They relied upon wives and widows to perform basic social services, namely the care for the sick, elderly and infirm.

If women did not have their own accommodations, they began taking shelter around churches, sometimes living with their children among a community of other women in similar circumstances. Husbands or sons who periodically returned might take up living with them for a while, and then return to duties for the state or travel for trade and commerce. In 1608, Tobol'sk townspeople built a church and were supporting a group of women living within the fortress

²²⁷ N. N. Pokrovskii and E. K. Romodanovskaia, *Tobol'skii arkhieieiskii dom v XVII veke*, (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograf, 1994), 193-194. Details from correspondence from Archbishop Kiprian to the patriarch and tsar in Moscow *Kopiinaia Kniga 1620-1626*, No. 68 (29 July, 1622).

walls to take care of the elderly and sick among them.²²⁸ Only centuries later in stylized church histories would this community be considered a convent of religious women, for when Archbishop Kiprian arrived in 1621 he thought otherwise. Writing to Patriarch Filaret in November of that same year, he described what he observed of religious life:

In all Siberian towns – all kinds of service men, Cossacks, Cossack wives, and all ranks of people, and even the sick take vows as monastics, and the monks and nuns who took vows, live in their own houses as before and with their own husbands and wives. And they even take off their monastic clothes and live as worldly people, as before and behave exceedingly badly...²²⁹

When Archbishop Kiprian arrived, his most immediate concern was the informal and non-conforming religious practices taking shape in Tobol'sk and other regional population centers. The formal establishment of convents and monasteries addressed the issue of monastic discipline, but the new archbishop's goals for ordered religious life extended to the larger population of Orthodox Christians. The social conditions and the irregular religious life Kiprian observed in Siberia revealed disarray in both secular and spiritual communities, and he looked to the churchmen he brought from European Russia to exemplify a regulated religious life. In numerous letters to the tsar and patriarch, the archbishop told of the ungodly and profane manner of nearly all Russian inhabitants, and he was notably concerned with the welfare of women. There is every indication that Kiprian saw monastic women in the role of exemplars, yet women as ideal nuns or otherwise were not part of the group of clerics that accompanied him to Siberia.

Under Kiprian's direction, the emerging population of women already identifying as nuns needed instruction in religious practice, and this task was supported by the abbots, stroiteli,

²²⁸ I. L. Man'kova, 220.

²²⁹ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 17; N. N. Pokrovskii and E. K. Romodanovskaia, *Tobol'skii arkhieieiskii dom v XVII veke*, 194.

and hieromonks brought from Moscow, Novgorod, and Kazan. Although assigned to monasteries, they also monitored the behavior and regulated the religious practice of this new group of religious women. It is likely that they sought out literate women with social standing to lead female communities. Widows of prominent men were likely choices, but such women were generally outspoken, had developed their own personal authority and self-reliance, and may have had charismatic followers. As matrons of the community, they spoke through the saints and the Mother of God, and wielded significant popular power. Since the establishment of the early Christian church, bishops struggled to manage spiritual, but unruly, women under their authority, and on the Siberian frontier, many centuries later little in this respect had changed.

The Efficient Siberian Convent

Eventually, the purpose of monastic life for women was to uphold Orthodox practices for heavily outnumber co-religionists on the frontier, and to serve the expansive needs of the state as economic and political centers representing Russian rule. The concerns of church hierarchs about convents in European Russia in the twelfth through the sixteenth century were similar to those in Siberia. However, tasks in Siberian convents differed significantly from the prototypical, time-honored convents in European Russia. The Pokrovskii Convent in Suzdal' and the Novodevichii Convent in Moscow had a long history of tonsured members of the royal family and other elite women in residence. They received large endowments, were granted substantial land and peasant holdings, and were a popular place of pilgrimage due to their location adjacent to populated centers in the heart of Russia. While my focus will be on Siberian convents, it is instructive to briefly examine some of the key conceptual difference among female monastic

institutions in Western Europe, European Russia, and the development of female religious communities on the Siberian frontier.

Historically, monastic women in all parts of Russia were not cloistered as in Western Christian practice, and no specific monastic orders developed in the Russian Orthodox Church. Female monastic communities in the Western Christian tradition housed women designated for more mundane livelihoods, which supported the economic operation of a convent, but certain monastic orders existed primarily as contemplative spaces for women within a closed or cloistered community. Monastic life in Russia made no such distinctions, and adherents were embedded in the daily social and economic life of their respective urban or rural communities. The prototypical convents of European Russia and the derivative nunneries that emerged in Siberia provide a broader context for understanding the transformations in female monastic communities in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Russia.

Convents that I will term “dignified” institutions housed women of grand princely tsarist houses in central Russia along with other women from the highest elites. In contrast, the “efficient” provincial Siberian convents transformed women on the frontier to serve in roles as agents of empire. Both types of convents served specific institutional purposes for the Russian church and state, and the “efficient” women’s monasteries were designed to emulate the “dignified” ones. Their personal performances of monastic life were strikingly similar, as both conformed to sanctioned Orthodox practice, but were also leveraged to support of the needs of church and state, which differed. While church ideals and state institutional practices were dictated both east and west of the Ural Mountains, monastic women interpreted and negotiated demands for religious, economic and political service.

For centuries, convents were often associated with inconvenient wives, protection of vulnerable daughters and widows, and escape from worldly concerns into devotion to piety. The desire to take monastic vows was certainly individual to each woman, yet it is impossible to know their distinct motivations. The majority of monastic women took vows of their own volition for practical reasons based on economic and social conditions, or personal piety. When women were forced in to monastic life or forcibly tonsured, the convent became a “cloister,” but not for reasons of piety. Most often women relegated to monasteries against their will ended up there for political reasons at the direction of the ruling monarch or other elite members of society who viewed convents as secure repositories for inconvenient women. In the eighteenth century under Peter I’s Spiritual Regulation, which sought to reform monastic life along Western models of cloistered nuns, contact between nuns and worshipers was to be heavily restricted, with limited activity outside of convent walls. Throughout the seventeenth century, convents in European Russia continued to house elite women for a variety of political purposes, yet Siberian convents began to fulfill a similar role only following the death of Peter I in 1725. Convents on the Siberian frontier in the seventeenth century served as cultural markers of Orthodoxy, while securing church lands in an expanding frontier, but as yet did not have the overt function to house political prisoners as their counterparts in European Russia had done for centuries. In the eighteenth century, the “efficient” Siberian convents emulated the “dignified” convents and became the chosen location for undesirable members of elite Russian society, specifically women who voiced political opposition in the capital. Often when imprisoned in European Russia, political opponents managed to gather followers, and they prevailed upon the nuns to

allow them contact with others contrary to imperial decree. Sometimes they even escaped.²³⁰

The political antagonism of opponents sent to far off convents and monasteries was silenced by the distance, harsh environment, and the scant population of Siberia.

Further into the eighteenth century, at a time of political uncertain loyalties fueled by palace coups, subsequent rulers used Siberian convents (and monasteries) as an “efficient,” and expedient solution for the imprisonment of political opponents. The expansion of convents in far off Siberia, combined with the legislated physical restrictions on female monastic activity, provided an ideal location for women to serve not only in religious and economic capacities, but also in political roles as jailors. Thus, the “dignified” convent of European Russia was relieved of the onerous obligation of housing and monitoring the long-term imprisonment of women, once its derivative, “efficient” institutions were established on the frontier. When further monastic reforms were instituted under Catherine II in 1764 and the majority of convents throughout Russia were ordered to close and consolidate, numerous Siberian convents continued to operate into the early 1780s. The existence of political prisoners still held in custody can at least partially explain the almost 20-year delay in compliance with Catherine II’s state reform in Siberia. In 1788, the Tobol’sk prison facility began operations to confine both female and male prisoners formerly held at monastic locations. The two convents and small number of monasteries that remained open in Siberia, also remained penitential spaces for moral correction, but subsequently political prisoners were exiled to Siberia perform service for the government, usually hard labor.

²³⁰ RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 449, ch.1 – Documents from Secret Chancellery interrogations reveal that Princess Praskov’ia Iusupova had numerous unauthorized visitors while confined at the Tikhvin Vvedenskii Convent from 1730-1735, which in part led to her exile and imprisonment in Siberia after 1735.

REGULATION OF FEMALE MONASTICS

Both officials of church and state understood the complex function of Siberian convents as locations with lands, peasants, and endowments, which also served as fortifications and local places for religious penance, and ideally suited for a life sentence of captivity. These convents were places that did not necessarily adhere rigidly to the directives of church hierarchs in Moscow, but rather they interpreted, negotiated, and balanced local pragmatic needs with the compliance with church and state regulations from the center. Numerous convents in Siberia were instructed to follow the reforms of Archbishop Kiprian, who aspired to create convents that would function as moral examples of Orthodoxy as licentiousness, exploitation of native peoples and other immoral behavior abounded on the Siberian frontier.²³¹ Paradoxically, Kiprian's desire to separate monastic women from secular frontier life, where they dressed and behaved only as part-time monastics, made it difficult for women in convents to perform as daily models of Orthodox women. As the behavior of monastic women was scrutinized and regulated, they were discouraged from excessive interaction with established patterns of secular female life. Likely, he saw no contradiction in separating the individual social connections from the dictated institutional needs, as he understood female monasticism much differently than the women who practiced it. There are no available records on how women living around churches, caring for the sick, and selling their wares in Tobol'sk and elsewhere in Siberia reacted to the changes Kiprian introduced. Presumably some were disgruntled and desperate after they were driven off, especially if they had children and absent husbands. However, we *do* know how monastic women on the other side of the Urals reacted to institutional reforms that affected their social standing and everyday lives.

²³¹ Safronov, *Svetochi Zemli Sibirskoi*, 13.

Monastic women in central Russia, at the Suzdal' Pokrovskii Convent, openly protested church reforms. Voina Korsakov, the *striapchik*²³² assigned to the convent, reported defiance at the Suzdal' convent when an investor visited the convent in 163, and Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich replied:

... by the order of the tsar [they] were told to bake bread, and cook cabbage soup and gruel, and any other food in the kitchens [of the convent] and give them to the Abbess and the sisters...and not go against the communal rule. On 6 September 1631, an investor, Boyar Prince Mikhail Vasileevich Gorbatov, was in the convent alms room near the common refectory, when elder nun Ul'iana Molvianinova, Fedora Vorobina, and Sunklitikeia Bedrikova began refusing the orders of the *stroishchik*. They were indecently barking at Abbess Elena and cellaress Evpraksiia that they do not want to part of this community, or pick cabbage in the garden and divide it, or grain and oil, or divide any other food stocks among the cells. The tsar orders the rebellious elder nun and those that took part in the clamor to be exiled from the Pokrovskii monastery: Ul'iana Molvianinova – to Beloozero at the Voskresenskii monastery, Fedora Vorobina – to Vologda at the Gornii devichi monastery, and Sunklitikeia Bedrikova – to Riazan' to the Ogrofenina hermitage.²³³

Outbursts about the conversion from idiorhythmic life to living in common spaces, eating at communal tables, and wearing common dress were likely a common occurrence at this and other convents. The presence of an important donor was important for the convent, but his arrival prompted a crackdown on the nuns' lax behavior, which in turn triggered open rebellion on the

²³² The original text reads “*stroishchik*” or builder, but Marie Thomas' study of the convent translates the meaning to *strapchik*, which may be more accurate since the Tsar appointed him to oversee the convent's transition from idiorhythmic to coenobitic organization. The term “*stroitel*” would have been a church appointed position of builder – a hieromonk that serves as the head of a monastery or convent in lieu of an abbot or archimandrite.

²³³ I. M. Kataev and A. K. Kabanov, *Opisanie aktov sobraniia Grafa A. S. Uvarova* [hereafter *Akti Uvarova*], (Moscow: Tip. G. Lissnera, 1905), No. 147, 168-169.

part of the nuns. Whether because the convent was embarrassed, or because the nuns were deemed incorrigible, the incident resulted in the exile of the offending nuns. Institutional concerns displaced the individual preferences of its inhabitants. Thomas notes that *striapchiki* were typically limited to doing village business on behalf of the convent, and did not oversee internal functions. The fact that the tsar had appointed Voina Korsakov to oversee conversion of the convent from idiorhythmic to coenobitic organizing indicates that the nuns' opposition was well-known.²³⁴ The nuns at the Suzdal' Pokrovskii convent petitioned for Korsakov's removal in late September 1635 based on his severity in rationing food, and also that he was "running off monastery peasants...and that the convent will soon be ruined."²³⁵ The *striapchik* countered with his own complaints to the Archbishop of Suzdal' alleging that the female monastic leadership was incompetent; there was no discipline and nuns continued to consort with men. In October 1635, Patriarch Ioasaf reprimanded Abbess Elena placed her under strict observation for having a monk-deacon (*chernago diakona*) from the Spaso-Efimiev Monastery spend two nights in her room.²³⁶

The independent authority of the nuns and the abbess had been usurped by their male *striapchik* Voina Korsakov, but it does not appear that *striapchiki*, *stroishchiki*, or *stroiteli* were assigned to most Siberian convents. The Znamenskii Convent in Irkutsk was the exception, and

²³⁴ Marie A. Thomas, "Managerial Roles in the Suzdal'skii Pokorovskii Convent in the Seventeenth Century," *Russian History*, 7, Pt. 1-2 (1980), 101-106. Thomas refers to the nuns conflict with their assigned *striapchik*, however the original historical documents of the convent transcribed by A. S. Uvarov in the 19th century read *stroishchik*, that is *stroitel'* or builder – a superior in a male monastery that did not have a archimandrite or an abbot (see S. G. Pushkarev, *Dictionary of Historical Russian Terms*, 151). A *striapchik* could have been appointed by tsar, as Thomas' reading suggests, since in Muscovy they did serve in a variety of roles as courtiers, aides, or representatives of the tsar (Pushkarev, 150).

²³⁵ *Aki Uvarova*, No. 159, 65.

²³⁶ *Akti Uvarova*, No. 160, 65-66.

like in Suzdal' conflict also erupted there.²³⁷ In both cases the competence, character, and alleged sexual activities of the nuns and abbess were examined and found wanting. Even while church and state authorities tried to dictate the operations of convents so that they would fulfill their designated roles, the female inhabitants endured, and negotiated reform, intrusions, and hostilities in ways that thwarted the objectives of the men.

LIFE IN A WOMEN'S MONASTERY

The ideal monastic life is generally depicted as a humble, religious routine of self-discipline, which often took the form of prayer, fasting and manual labor, and abstinence from all forms of sensual pleasure for the purpose of attaining spiritual goals. Nuns and novices sought mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness for themselves, but even more, as bogomolitsy (prayers to God) they invoked the salvation of others. Accepting tonsure and taking vows as a nun, was an explicit act of turning away from the world in order to acquire the spiritual gifts of God. Female monastics looked to the lives of ascetic saints such Mary of Egypt and early Christian martyrs who struggled to enter the narrow gates of the Kingdom of God through mortification of the flesh or imitating the suffering of Christ. But how did Orthodox women in eighteenth-century Siberia come to understand what it meant to enter an ascetic monastic life compared with married life in the world? Women and men in villages and towns prescribed and displayed the boundaries of gender and expectations of humility and devotion, which influenced the identities that they would assume as monastic women.

²³⁷ A. V. Dulov and A. P. Sannikov, *Pravoslavnaia tsekov v vostochnoi Sibiri v XVII – nachale XX vekov*, (Irkutsk: Irkutskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2004), Section 01-3. First accessed on March, 10 2018 at <http://reomyp.pf/sources/cultural/relig/relig-x=028.php>

Women formed their conceptions of Orthodoxy prior to entering monastic life. Their first and primary teachers of Orthodox traditional spiritual practices were often other women, specifically older women who directed observance of holy days (feasts and fasts) and modeled behaviors of venerating icons, making the sign of the cross, and participating in icon processions or pilgrimages to holy places. Ideally, all women were to emulate humility, self-discipline, devotion, and abstinence from sensual pleasure as instructed by canon law and sermons preached in churches and monasteries.

While the general community of Orthodox women provided informal, daily models of piety and virtue, only certain Orthodox men (priests and ordained monastic priests) were accountable for the formal, institutional monitoring and regulation of proper female behavior in secular and monastic communities. Within the church and monastery, priests and spiritual fathers served a wholly different purpose than biological or adoptive fathers; instead of financial responsibility they were accountable for prayer, exhortation, and monitoring women's conduct and identity as Orthodox females. Only priests were empowered to administer the sacrament of confession, and through the questions they asked of penitents and the homilies they read to them, they taught the difference between sinful and righteous behavior. The penances they imposed, varying with the perceived seriousness of the sins, reinforced both the lessons and the priest's authority.²³⁸

Female gendered performance for laywomen and nuns varied little except in regards to sexual abstinence. As nuns and novices were married to the church, observed and regulated within the walls of the monastery. Women outside of monastic orders had to rely on their

²³⁸ Eve Levin, "Sex and the Clergy," in *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs 900–1700*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 247-96.

community for refuge, and instruction, but more often than not they employed their own wits, and discretion to negotiate the boundaries of gender and forged a life amidst the uncertainties of the Siberian frontier. Although the convent appears to offer a retreat from the world, and an alternative to marriage and family, it must also be recognized as a space that monitored and reinforced gender performance and the regulation of female sexuality. Thus, whether living within monastic confines or in the towns and villages the behavior of women fell under scrutiny in frontier communities of Siberia that sought to establish and spread Russian Orthodox culture throughout imperial lands.

NETWORK OF WOMEN'S CONVENTS IN SIBERIA

Historical accounts concerning the founding, organization, and operation of Siberian convents in this period reveal relationships of dependence and self-sufficiency between the Russian state, the Siberian Eparchy, and the convents located across Siberia. The survey of convents below will show models, lifestyles, and settings of convents in both seventeenth- and eighteenth-century contexts, with the Dalmatov Convent covered in a separate chapter as a detailed case study. The evidence of the conditions at the Pokrovskii Convent in Verkhotur'e serves as an example for the monastic spaces at Tobol'sk, Tiumen, Turinsk, Tomsk, and Tara, all established in the seventeenth century at locations separate from male monastics. The Eniseisk Convent stands out as a women's community that in 1623 witnessed the expeditious construction of churches, and granted large tracts of land prior to the establishment of two male monasteries in the mid to late seventeenth century. The convents at Dalmatov and Irkutsk appear to be co-located for a time with the men's monasteries for defensive security reasons, and thrived as important economic centers once through much of the eighteenth century.

Another aspect woven within the histories of convents and monastery is their imagined past, which has been glorified and exaggerated in subsequent histories of monastic spaces in Siberia, even as early as the seventeenth century. Thus, it is difficult to construct composite picture of monastic affairs in Siberia from the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The mythologized past is one element of historical reconstruction, as documents and records from defunct women's religious communities often did not survive the interregnum period between the reforms of 1764 to the late nineteenth revival of female monastic communities.²³⁹ In cases where archival records did survive, they are often incomplete; it is likely that some documents await discovery.

The Mythology of Tobol'sk Monastic Spaces

The first monastic space associated with the Uspenskii church was a nascent convent located in the upper town, within the garrison walls of Tobol'sk. A legend propagated by Siberian churchmen later in the seventeenth century tells of an early hermitage formed on the right bank of the Irtysh sometime prior to 1596 where several unnamed, pious monks began gathering at a hermitage. Due to the community's poverty there was no church or lands associated with the site, but a small church dedicated to Sts. Zosima and Savvatii Solovetskie

²³⁹ Although many of the convents or women's monastery are referenced in the edited volumes of L. I. Denisov's *Pravoslavnye monastyri rossiiskoi imperii* (1908), and V. V. Zverinskii's *Pravoslavnye monastyri v rossiiskoi imperii* (1890), these works often provide only basic information. Frequently they include only fleeting reference to the original 17th and 18th century convents, focusing instead on their mid- to late 19th century incarnations. In some cases, there is a complete name change of the institution based on popular use, geographic identifiers, or the transition from female to male monasteries and vice versa following the 1764 reform. Contradictory primary sources on the founding dates and the number of convents and monasteries in Siberia also complicate the record and process of accurate recovery, and is addressed in Irina Man'kov, "Vozniknovenie monastyrei v Sibirii v XVII veke: problemy datirovki i chistlennosti," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Istorii*, No. 47, 2017, 5-14.

was built in the closing years of the sixteenth century, and later the Znamenskii monastery was established at this site. However, Irina Man'kova has shown that the so-called "hermitage" of this legend was actually a place of exile for ostracized clerics attending to the needs of elderly and infirm soldiers. This "imagined monastery," as she termed it, was subsequently connected to the Zosima and Savvatii church later in the seventeenth century.²⁴⁰ In the first quarter of the seventeenth century, nothing in the names of the churches or the content of the iconostasis at the Uspenskii and the Znamenskii monasteries honored Sts. Zosima and Savvatii Solovetskie. Thus, the original community of exiled monks between 1596 and 1610 was recast as a hermitage in the lower part of Tobol'sk in later seventeenth-century church history. Chapels dedicated to Solovetskii miracle workers appeared for the first time in the second quarter of the seventeenth century at Znamenskii church, and then in the last quarter of the seventeenth century at the Kazan church. When Archbishop Kiprian separated the men's and women's monastic communities at the Uspenskii church in 1621, creating the Znamenskii monastery and the Uspenskii convent, the story connecting the Znamenskii monastery to a church to Sts. Zosima and Savvatii developed. With the creation of the Siberian Eparchy, its role as a spiritual center began to take shape, and the monasteries and convents became closely associated with the archbishop's residence and administrative seat of power at the Tobol'sk archiepiscopal house and the Sofiia Cathedral.²⁴¹ The need to identify historical roots occurred at the end of the

²⁴⁰ I. L. Man'kova, "Muzhskoi monastyr' v pravoslavnom landshafte Tobol'ska XVII v.," *Gumanitarnye nauki v Sibiri (Istoriia)*, No. 4, 2014, 67-70; and "Dozornaia Kniga 1624 kak istochnik dlia rekonstruktsii pravoslavnogo landshata Tobol'ska," *Izvestiia Uralsk'skogo federal'nogo universiteta, Seriia 2, Gumanitarnye nauki*, SO RAN, tom 16, 2014, No. 3(130): 212-226.

²⁴¹ Man'kova, "Muzhskoi monastyr'," 67.

seventeenth century during the process of elevating the sacred space of Tobol'sk through glorifying the status of monastic spaces in Siberia.

Man'kova's research highlights the pitfalls of accepting church lore at face value, outside of the larger historical context.

Following Man'kova's reconstruction, monasticism in Tobol'sk began with monks who were exiled outside of the main city for their own crimes. They attended to veterans of military service, but whether they undertook this task voluntarily, as an act of charity, or as a part of their criminal sentence is uncertain. These disgraced monks and those under their care were moved away from the river banks to the upper part of the city around 1609. There they joined nuns who were already living at the Uspenskii church, similarly caring for elderly and infirm state servitors. The service people of Tobol'sk gave donations for the construction of an additional church for the monks, which later became the Tobol'sk Uspenskii monastery, which borrowed its name from the existing women community at the Uspenskii church.²⁴²

The Tobol'sk Register Book (*Dozornaia Kniga*) of 1624 confirms that the Znamenskii men's monastery was first located in the lower part of Tobolsk, or outside the city walls, "on the meadows near the Tatar yurts toward the Mostovaia River and on the bank near the Irtysh River."²⁴³ Although hermitage did exist near the Tatar camp, it was not formally established as a monastery. Logistically the building of a church, and the founding of a monastery would likely be met with some hostility from the Tatar community, albeit for economic rather than religious reasons, as in the case of the Dalmatov monastery, discussed above. It is also unlikely that the Tobol'sk governor and his servitors collecting tribute, would have supported such a plan, but

²⁴² Man'kova, "Muzhskoi monastyr'," 68.

²⁴³ Man'kova, "Dozornaia Kniga 1624," 220.

they were willing to allow a shelter for infirm soldiers and disreputable clerics. The marshland near the river was not a suitable location for a monastery; it could not sustain agricultural crops, and these areas were well-known fishing and trapping lands for the local indigenous population. By 1610, the establishment of a religious center was possible in the upper part of the emerging city, and so the monastery was formed where trading venues existed inside the city walls. On the river the hermitage may have served an ancillary purpose to provide a model of Orthodoxy, but the overt practice of evangelization of native peoples was not a primary feature of Russian imperial expansion in newly acquired lands.

WESTERN SIBERIA

The Uspenskii Convent of Tobol'sk

The Sibirskaia Chronicle references the establishment of the monastery, but in fact Uspenskii convent for women already existed in the upper town at the location of the Uspenskii (Dormition) church. The chronicle recorded how in the year 7118 (1609/10) the monks were moved "from behind the Irtysh River" to an area near the community of nuns: "on the cliff, and behind the fortress, inside the Resurrection Gates, where the Maiden's Monastery is now."²⁴⁴ In this way, the chronicle reversed the actual order in which the men's and women's monasteries were founded, placing the women's convent second. Siberian Chancellery records show that a community of nuns lived in the upper part of the city, in and around the Uspenskii Church, its adjoining chapel dedicated to St. Varlaam Khutynskii, and the St. Nicholas Church. This community was substantial; it had seven individual cells, a storekeeper's hut with a "storehouse in the cellar," along with "a horse mill behind the monastery, near the storehouse for the

²⁴⁴ *PSRL*, vol. 36, part 1, p. 143

mill."²⁴⁵ Interestingly, the hermitage for the men, who were undesirables, was located close to the Tatar camp and the river, while the convent for the women was built in the upper town. This was a superior location, geographically and socially. It was where ethnic Russians lived, and it lay within the fortress itself, where it could be defended. The city walls provided some checks on who went in and out, both to protect and to monitor the women. The nearby mill was the center for gathering the agricultural production of the region. The shopkeepers formed the commercial locus of the new town, and the nuns were active participants in it, to judge from the presence of a store within their precinct.

The founding of the convent and the placement of a male monastery adjacent to it predated the establishment of the Siberian Eparchy ten years later in 1621. Archbishop Kiprian was not pleased with the co-location of the Uspenskii convent and monastery, which violated canon law. Prior to his departure in 1624, two separate locations were determined for the convent and monastery. The monastery was relocated to a place near the Vagai outpost, some 20 kilometers outside of Tobol'sk, and it was granted some meager tracts of land, likely with a mix of Russian and non-Russian peasants and other monastic laborers. Construction of the new women's convent began in 1622-23. The convent remained in the upper part of the city, under the watchful eye of the archbishop, and its lands and churches were only a few kilometers from the city center. It contained "5 cells, a main storehouse, a vault under the church, the food stores under the refectory, a granary behind the monastery, and a courtyard for cows."²⁴⁶ While these amenities were substantial for a new frontier town, they suggest that nuns in the urban location

²⁴⁵ Man'kova, "Dozornaia Kniga 1624," 219; her source is RGADA, f. 214, op.1, d. 3, l. 61, 65 ob.

²⁴⁶ Man'kova, "Dozornaia Kniga 1624," 220; her source, the *Tobol'sk Dozornaia Kniga 1624*, is held at RGADA, f. 214, op.1, d.3, l. 66, 68ob.

of Tobol'sk were distanced from direct involvement in agricultural work. Their facility was designed to store food, and they likely engage in daily buying, selling, and milling. It is likely that the nuns also discontinued the care of the ill and infirm men, with this task reassigned to the archiepiscopal house for reasons of propriety, but the convent probably took up the care of elderly and ailing townswomen. At the end of 1624, the new Tobol'sk Metropolitan Makarii consecrated its new church of dedicated to the Novogorod Znamenie icon of the Mother of God. Sometime after this, the Uspenskii convent was renamed as the Rozhdestvenskii Convent. The Uspenskii Church and the St. Nicholas Church, which were originally associated with the women's monastic community, became part of the complex of the Tobol'sk archiepiscopal house. In this way, the archbishops both provided for the nuns while monitoring their public roles.

The Znamenskii men's monastery may have received its name in 1624, or perhaps later in the seventeenth century as part of a campaign to elevate the status of the monasteries in the sacred space of Tobol'sk. Popular accounts and church legends claim that the monastery arose on the site, where the miracle working Abalak Icon of the Mother of God appeared to a widow named Mary in 1636, some 20 kilometers on the upper Irtysh River at the Vagai outpost. However, all available evidence shows that the men's monastery was relocated to the settlement of Vagai in the early 1620s, away from the nuns at the site in Tobol'sk, and at the behest of Kiprian, who was concerned with the co-mingling of clerics due to the appearance of, and potential for, unseemly behavior. The documented visions of the saints and the Mother of God by the widow Maria at the Vagai settlement calling for a church to be built in 1636 were fulfilled some years later. Thus, the appearance of the local Abalak Icon of the Mother of God in the 1630s, although significant, has been conflated with the founding the Znamenskii monastery. In

1661 with the acquisition of the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God of Kazan by the Znamenskii monastery, as well as large tracts of land, fishing rights and peasant labor granted and donated to the monastery in the same year saw the religious and economic status of the monastery dramatically improve.²⁴⁷

The separation of convent and monastery may have resolved incidents of improper behavior between nuns and monks, but the sexual regulation of parish priests and lay Orthodox followers also fell under the authority and scrutiny of the newly established Eparchy. As for the surveillance of the disreputable clerics and lay people, the spiritual court may have continued to banish them to the lower quarter of the city among the Tatars on the river,²⁴⁸ where their immoral behavior would have continued unchecked. More likely, the offenders were dispatched to either the convent or the monastery, depending on their gender, for penance.

The Tobol'sk Rozhdestvenskii Convent continued to grow into the first half of the eighteenth century. In the mid-eighteenth century, when the widow Anna Andreeva took vows there, eparchial authorities reported 26 nuns living at the convent with 24 places still available.²⁴⁹ Fifty nuns were authorized to live at the convent in 1750, but fourteen years later the number dropped to 17 following state monastic reforms of 1764.²⁵⁰ The dislocation of nuns was gradual from 1764 to the end of the eighteenth century, and most often those without a designated place continued to live at the convent. They no longer received a monetary stipend,

²⁴⁷ *Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim*, t. 4, No. 111, 262-266.

²⁴⁸ In the 18th century Orthodox churches were built in the lower part of the city, near the river at the base of the escarpment with the upper city overlooking the lower. This may be the location of the original hermitage associated with monastic activity, or as a way to project the growing influence of Orthodoxy and a method to mark the landscape.

²⁴⁹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 417, *Delo o postrizhenii vdovy sluzhitelia Petra Luzina – Anna Andreeva*, 1750, l. 4.

²⁵⁰ *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I.*, St. Petersburg, 1830, T. XVI, No. 12060, 12121; T. XLIV, Ch. II (kniga shtatov, otd. III)

however; perhaps they took to begging for alms in the upper part of the city. Even though the Tobol'sk convent was located at the eparchial administrative and religious center, its records seem to have been poorly preserved, so that its demographic composition and socio-economic functions within the city of Tobol'sk remain little known.

Verkhotur'e Pokrovskii Convent

When the new Archbishop Kiprian of Siberia passed through Verkhotur'e in 1621, he noted that there was an existing monastery with women and men residents who claim to be monastics, even though they still living in a secular fashion. He negotiated with the governor and existing landholders to allow a church to be built for ten nuns in the lower half of the city, at the confluence of the Tura and Derneika rivers. In 1622, this site was designated as the Pokrovskii Convent, and the nuns petitioned Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich, telling him that “there are no bells, and books, and icons, and there is nothing to buy them with.” In reply, the tsar ordered that the convent be maintained with state funds, and to arrange for a church, cells, and a fence to be built for the nuns. The ten nuns at the Verkhotur'e Pokrovskii Convent were to receive an annual stipend (*ruga*) of two rubles per nun, but funding was promised for only one year.²⁵¹ Monastic dowries or deposits may have not been required, but the material conditions at the Siberian convents were dependent upon monies set aside by the women themselves, their family members, and gifts of other donors, as support from local state officials was uncertain, or non-existent. Abbess Anisiia and the nuns at the Pokrovskii Convent were to make do with a meager

²⁵¹ I. L. Man'kova, “Verkhoturskii Pokrovskii monastyr' v XVII veke,” *Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii “Verkhoture' – dukhovnyi tsentr Urala”*, Verkhotur'e, 2014: 69.

annual stipend of 20 rubles, but to be self-supporting they needed significant donations, or the use of arable land for crops and hay, and fishing rights, for their financial subsistence.

Kiprian wrote to the tsar and patriarch in 1622 and explained that even though the tsar had granted land and a monetary stipend, local governors were disobeying orders, and refusing to support convents and monasteries.²⁵² As Verkhotur'e grew in size, the land the convent was requesting may have not been available, or was more valuable to local officials. They continued to put off the requests of the convent and the Tobol'sk Archbishop. Although the nuns had not received the lands promised by the state, local landholders gave 2.5 acres on which to build the convent, 15 chetverti, or approximately 18.5 acres of land to farm in 1621, and another 50 acres was added to their holdings in 1623. Thereby the nuns gained the means to live off the land.²⁵³ The donated land was located 18 kilometers from the convent in villages along the Tura River. In 1645, Abbess Iriada complained that "we do not have a church, icons and books, bells, a garden plot, private rooms, or the allotted land, hay and fishing rights." By this time, the number of nuns had grown to twenty, and two cells and a dilapidated church were not sufficient.²⁵⁴ According to the petitions of the nuns, after nearly twenty years the convent still had not received the land and buildings from Governor Streshnev, and all previous officials in Verkhotur'e had delayed financial support to the convent.

The convent appeared to be financially stable with some income from its lands, yet the nuns continued to complain about the lack of local support for constructing a church and cells,

²⁵² N. N. Pokrovskii and E. K. Romodanovskaia, *Tobol'skii arkhieieiskii dom v XVII veke*, (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii Khronograf, 1994), 196.

²⁵³ Man'kova, "Verkhoturskii Pokrovskii monastyr' v XVII veke," 71.

²⁵⁴ P. A. Korchagin, *Istoriia Verkhotur'ia (1598-1926): Zakonomernosti sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia skladyvaniia arkhitekturno-istoricheskoi sledy goroda*, Ekaterinburg, 2012: 208.

and they continued to ask the tsar to make the governor fulfill his obligations. The issue for the nuns was the lack of living space; they had only a dilapidated building with a few rooms—that is, little more than a widow’s private house. The lack of rooms left the majority of the nuns to seek shelter “in the world,” and return to live with their families, a practice the Tobol’sk archbishop had expressly forbidden. Their appeals for a church should be understood as more than merely a sanctuary in which to conduct prayers, but as a facility containing multiple rooms, including a kitchen and a dining hall. In other words, they were asked for a convent. The monks gathered at the outpost in the early 1620s, likely straining the resources of a single dilapidated church, and precipitating the need for financial support that was realized in a miraculous vision associated with the Abalak icon in 1636. convent was able to augment its income at a rate of two rubles per year through baking communion bread for local parish churches; it seems that the abbesses performed this task personally, rather than sharing it with the other nuns.²⁵⁵

When the single house of the convent burned down in 1650, she and the 15 nuns had no place to go. She lamented to Tobol’sk, “now how will the nuns be able to exist without a church, and there is nothing for us to erect a [new] church.”²⁵⁶ Not receiving the reply she had hoped for, she and the nuns decided not to count on the local authorities any further. Abbess Mariia set off for Moscow to personally deliver a petition to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. She asked for two unused tracts of land that overlooked the water near the gates of the city fortress. Tsar Alesksei fulfilled her request, and sent a letter in February 1651 that commanded Governor

²⁵⁵ Man’kova, 75.

²⁵⁶ M. Iu Nechaeva, *Zhenskie obiteli Verkhotur’e*, (Ekaterinburg, 2000), 12. First accessed September 6, 2018 at <http://atlasch.narod.ru/works/girl.htm>. Much of the description of the establishment of the Pokrovskii Convent in Vekhotur’e in the 17th century is summarized from Nechaeva’s study, and where possible I have return to and annotated the original texts and correspondences from primary sources.

Rafa Vsevolozhskii to erect the church with local state funds: "With our treasury, build a small structure, without which there would be nothing left [of the convent], and avoid unnecessary waste."²⁵⁷ Abbess Mariia not only returned with a royal charter, but also with gifts for the new church and future convent building: church vessels, tin decorations for icons, icons of patron saints, velvet altar cloths, vestments for the nuns, sacramental linen, strands of decorative thread, a censer, and printed books of the Gospels and the lives of the saints, service books, and a study Psalter.²⁵⁸ As a reminder of the tsar's involvement, a separate letter was issued from Moscow on March 6 of the same year, instructing the governor to issue a bucket of wine and two pounds of incense a year for church needs. Once the abbess had secured all the adornments for a proper church, paired with appropriate habits for the nuns, all the gift of powerful patrons in Moscow, it was difficult for local church and state authorities to leave them wandering in the street.

Moscow's support was beneficial for the convent, as local residents followed the tsar's example and increased their own assistance the Pokrovskii Convent. In 1660, Terentii Safronov volunteered to collect donations for the convent in Verkhotur'sk and Tobol'sk districts for the erection of Church of the Intercession. This was the third in a series of wooden convent churches that had burnt down only to be rebuilt again, at mostly the community's expense. When the Church of the Intercession was deemed too dilapidated for services to be conducted in it in 1684, local donors failed to come to the aid the convent. Abbess Marfa and the nuns once again appealed to the sovereign requesting not only a church, but additional funds. They explained that the existing grain allotment was sufficient for only thirteen nuns, but the residents included

²⁵⁷ Nechaeva, 13.

²⁵⁸ Nechaeva, 13.

the abbess, seventeen sisters, and ten “poor and sick” nuns.²⁵⁹ The community acknowledged the influence of the monastic women, and construction of the convent church finally began in 1686.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, the population of the convent was in part dictated by the annual stipend (*ruga*) of cash and grain. Each nun received in addition one arshin of cloth (about 28 inches) or three kopecks on the name days of royal family members and major church holidays.²⁶⁰ Ten nuns received a stipend from 1621 to 1631, with thirteen in 1634, twenty in 1645. In 1651, twelve nuns received a stipend and fourteen or fifteen nuns received five separate state gifts. In 1652, fourteen nuns received stipends with fifteen or sixteen receiving five separate state gifts. In 1684, seventeen nuns received stipends. In 1707, instead of cash and partial grain stipend, the abbess received an annual grain allotment of approximately 72 dry gallons of rye, and 52 dry gallons of oats for 12 nuns.²⁶¹ The change in stipend and lack of state gifts to the nuns reflects that agricultural production in Western Siberia, (or the distribution system for grain) had improved in the course of the seventeenth century, while cash sent to the region from the state had become scarce, diverted for military or other purposes.

Accounts of the convent from the end of the seventeenth century until the mid-eighteenth century describe an ongoing series of fires and rebuilding projects funded by landholders and affluent mine owners in the region. The dwindling economic importance of Verkhotur’e after the building of the city of Ekaterinburg in 1723, and the completion of the southern Siberian road in 1763, which directed commercial traffic away from the convent and city, also contributed to the convent’s decline in the eighteenth century. Another fire ravaged the convent in 1738, and nearly

²⁵⁹ Man’kova, “Verkhoturskii Pokrovskii monastyr’ v XVII veke,” 69.

²⁶⁰ Man’kova, “Verkhoturskii Pokrovskii monastyr’ v XVII veke,” 74.

²⁶¹ Man’kova, 69, 74-75. The original text reads: “*chet’ s os’minoiu i pol-2 chetverika pzhi, chet’ s chetverikom ovsa*,” (chet’ = 46 dry gallons; osmina = 23 dry gallons; chetvertik = 6 dry gallons).

burned down the entire city of Verkhotur'e. The Pokrovskii Convent was officially abolished in 1764, even though since the late 1750's it held neither land nor peasants. Under Catherine II's state monastery reform each eparchy was only allowed to retain one convent, and Verkhotur'e was part of the expansive Tobol'sk Eparchy from the Ural Mountain to the Enisei River. The only female monastery left in its territory was to be located in Tobol'sk at the Rozhdestvenskii Convent. The nuns of Verkhotur'e likely lived out their days at the convent with little or no financial support, as it was unlikely, they could gain places in other convents in Siberia or European Russia. This explains why nuns stopped inhabiting the convent in 1782.²⁶²

Turinisk Pokrovskii (Nikolaveksii) Convent

Under the direction of Archbishop Kiprian, the Turinsk Pokrovskii Convent was founded in 1624 as a coenobitic convent in the upper part of the town on the banks of the Tura River. Kiprian ordered hieromonk Makarii to move several nuns living at the Pokrovskii convent in Verkhotur'e to the new convent in Turinsk. In 1664 the convent had an abbess, 31 nuns, and 150 lay novices, and it controlled 2.7 acres of land and received 18 rubles and 30 kopecks from the Tobol'sk eparchial treasury.

Tiumen Iliinskii (Alekseevskii. Uspenskii) Convent

Not long after the founding of Tiumen in the 1580s, women began gathering at the Iliinskii church as an unofficial monastic community. In 1586/1587, with the support of rector Nikon at the Tiumen men's monastery, the group of women received official sanction to operate

²⁶² In the 1854 account of Abbot Makarii in the "Description of the City of Verkhotur'e," and in other nineteenth-century historical accounts the convent no longer supported a female monastic community.

as a convent from the Vologodsk Eparchy, which then served as the ecclesiastical headquarters for Siberia. In 1621, Archbishop Kiprian confirmed the women's monastery, then known as the Ilinskii Convent. Grain allotment records of the early 1620 attest that an abbess and nine nuns were living at the convent at that time.²⁶³ The convent was located inside the town of Tiumen, and as an urban convent with no lands to work, it is unlikely that its number grew significantly over the following decades when the newly tonsured abbess took charge in 1665. The convent was renamed the Tiumen Alekseevskii Convent in 1658, possibly due a fire or its relocation to a different part of the city.

Abbess Paraskeva, a widow of a prominent Tiumen Cossack, Artem Liubimov-Tvorogov, served in her position at the Tiumen Alekseevskii Convent from 1665 until her retirement in 1685. Her son, Archbishop Afanasii of Kholmogory, was an important church prelate, but it was her own status in the Tiumen community that resulted in her appointment as head nun. In 1687, a fire destroyed the Alekseevskii Convent, and the retired abbess and the sisters were relocated to the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent while a new convent was built. Former Abbess Paraskeva died at the Dalmatov Convent some time before 1700, so she did not return with the other sisters after the construction of the new Tiumen Uspenskii Convent was completed in the first decade of the eighteenth century.²⁶⁴

In 1750, the convent requested support for the nuns, in the form of bread and grain, from the Siberian Chancellery in Tobol'sk. The chancellery denied their request, explaining that it was not possible to provide for the nuns.²⁶⁵ The nuns seem to have found their own way of

²⁶³ Korchagin, 208.

²⁶⁴ Plotnikov, *Opisanie*, 94.

²⁶⁵ GATO (TOB), f. II56, op. 1, d. 421, *Delo po soobshcheniiu iz Sibirskoi gubernskoi kantseliarii o nebozmozhnosti vydachi khlebnogo zhalovan'ia monakhiniam Tiumenskogo zhenskogo monastyria*, 1750.

copied with the lack of material support from Tobol'sk, namely through theft. A year later the nuns came under investigation by authorities at the Tobol'sk Spiritual Court, charged with stealing church property.

At five o'clock in the morning on September 6, 1751, the head nun Pelagiia of the Tiumen Uspenskii women's monastery burst into the house of Grigorii Protopopov, the monastery sexton, accusing him of theft. She immediately began searching through his house and cellar for personal items and property that had gone missing over the last several months. The Protopopov was not only insulted by her intrusion and her calling him a thief, but he was also worried by her accusations. He quickly sent off a letter to the Abbot describing the occurrence and claiming his innocence. He began by pointing out that the ecclesiastical officials at the Trinity Monastery in Tiumen had not authorized Pelagiia's search, and that the head nun was taking things into her own hands. He concluded his letter by stating that the items she had found in his house were certainly not stolen goods. The book of Psalms that she says he stole was actually sold to him by the priest Grigorii Shmotkin for one ruble, and his late father left him the other church service items - the damask silk cloth, the printed screen, and the decorative linens coverings. The head nun Pelagiia asserted that all of these items belonged to the monastery church; furthermore, she declared, she had proof that the sexton was also pilfering much need firewood from the monastery. In his house she found an entire *sazhen'*, about seven linear feet, of wood, while he was only allotted of half an *arshin*, yet he had six times that amount.²⁶⁶ The sexton had been away from the monastery for an entire week, Pelagiia noted slyly, implying that he was hiding stolen goods elsewhere or that he had already sold them.

²⁶⁶ Reference for Old Russian measurements see, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona: in 86 Vol.* (Vol. 82 and Sup. 4), St. Petersburg, 1890-1907.

Protopopov made no attempt to explain his absence or the extra firewood, but instead he made a counter claim of illicit activity at the women's monastery. He declared that the head nun Pelagiia was covering up scandalous behavior by allowing a man to live among women at the monastery.

The Protopopov revealed that a low-ranking military servitor, Ivan Kolov, was secretly staying at the monastery church and he had been seen in the company of two women - a disgraced wife, Palagiia Filipova, and the young novice Mariia Ivanova. Head nun Pelagiia disputed Protopopov's testimony. She contended that Ivan Kolov had never lived in the monastery church. She also doubled down on her original charge of theft against Protopopov. The sexton's daughter-in-law and his own sister, she claimed, could testify that he was a thief and had stolen books from the priest as well as the firewood. She then explained that it was well known to ecclesiastical officials in Tiumen and Tobol'sk that over a year ago Palagiia Filipova had been sentenced to three years of hard labor and penance at the monastery after she was found guilty of lying and fornication. Since then her behavior was monitored not only by her and other nuns, but also every six months a monastic priest visited, received her confession, and reported on her conformity and penance, and he had found no irregularities or evidence of secret liaisons. Regarding the young novice, Pelagiia had sent her away from the monastery for impertinence. The head nun had punished her several times for making evening visits to the sexton's house. When Pelagiia confronted Protopopov he had defended the young novice and denied that they had engaged in sex during her evening visits. Protopopov countered that the head nun was lying, and that she herself had told him that Ivan Kolov was living in the church and instructed him (Protopopov) not to bother him (Kolov).

On November 26, 1751, Grigorii Protopopov and the head nun Pelagiia were brought in before their ecclesiastical administrative superiors at the Trinity monastery in Tiumen. For a second time Pelagiia denied that she was harboring the military servitor, Ivan Kolov, at her monastery. Protopopov's daughter-in-law Pelagiia claimed, was undoubtedly lying when she denied her father-in-law's crimes. Pelagiia added that on the evening of 3 September she had visited the sexton's daughter-in-law and sister who lived near the monastery. They told the head nun that Protopopov had visited a Tiumen townswoman who lived near the monastery, Savesy Polubakhmatova. Pelagiia went to see the woman, who admitted that Protopopov tried to sell her an altar cloth. But Savesy told Pelagiia that she had not bought it; the altar cloth was torn, so she sent him away. But Savesy admitted to Pelagiia that the monastery sexton often came to visit her and tried to sell her other stolen goods.

In November 1751, the ecclesiastical authorities found Grigorii Protopopov guilty of theft. That crime would have carried a sentence of death under secular law,²⁶⁷ but the ecclesiastical court ordered him to be fined, whipped, and exiled to a distant outpost further in Siberia. The novice Mariia Ivanova was judged to be unsuited for monastic life; the appearance of impropriety in her conduct with the monastery sexton was sufficiently damning. However, the case did not end then, because ecclesiastical officials in Tiumen and Tobol'sk continued their investigation for another month. The head nun Pelagiia was again questioned about Ivan Kolov, and for a third time she tearfully proclaimed that her and the sisters had no knowledge of such a man living in their church, swearing that she was telling the truth and was not keeping anything from her interrogators.

²⁶⁷ The archival document cites the 1649 Law Code - *Ulozhenie* Chapter 22, Section 3.

Soon accounts of how Ivan Kolov was living at the women's monastery were being circulated among the monastic peasants, and the stories became known to the tribunal investigating head nun Pelagiia. The investigators determined that the source of the stories about Ivan Kolov came from the Kozlov family, who were peasants working the convent's land. So, they brought Nikita, Luk and Petr Kozlov, to the Tiumen Trinity monastery for questioning. Nikita Kozlov testified that the nun Zinaida had told him to bring a load of hay to monastery, which was going to be sold to a customer. When he arrived later that night with his father and brother to deliver the hay, they all noticed that Ivan Kolov was living in the church, and the nun Zinaida was attempting to hide him in the church. Nikita Kozlov revealed more details about the activities of the nun Zinaida and the military servitor, Ivan Kolov. He admitted to seeing Zinaida bring out a large box along with some smaller boxes, but at first, he claimed that he did not know what they contain. Under more coercive pressure, Nikita Kozlov's memory returned and he revealed that the nun and Ivan Kolov had taken numerous items from various icons belonging to the Uspenskii church:

The first [box contained] a copper *venets*²⁶⁸ and *grivna*²⁶⁹ from the miracle working icon of St. Nicholas and Blaise belonging to the church, and three-quarters of it was lying on the floor. A second held the entire copper *venets* and *grivna* from a miracle working icon... A third copper *venets* and *grivna* from an icon, a half an arshin in length... A fourth copper *venets* and *grivna* from the icon of the holy martyr Parasekva. A fifth copper *venets* and *grivna* from an icon... but the name of the saint was not written on it. A sixth copper *venets* and *grivna* from an icon, a half an *arshin* in length...; the name of the saint was not written on it but maybe there was written a written document inside.

²⁶⁸ *venets* - a metal crown-like adornment covering the halo of the saint depicted in the icon.

²⁶⁹ *grivna* – also known as a *tsata* (цѣта; meaning "small coin" just as the *grivna* is a reference to a small coin). It is a decorative crescent shaped, metal adornment covering the collar and attached to the halo (*venets*) of the saint depicted in the icon.

There was one fourth of a mirrored frame that was six *chety* in length in a small box and it seemed there was also another one, a metal [frame] without mirrors.²⁷⁰

Nikita's detailed knowledge is surprising, if not suspicious. According to Nikita's testimony, he was literate; he could read the names on the icons, when they were visible and he noticed the document. Luk Kozlov, Nikita's father, testified that he was called to the Uspenskii church at night by the nun Deodra in the spring of 1750. She ordered him to carry several bags of items from the cell of another nun, Antonida. Although he did not know exactly what was in the bags, while he was making one of several trips, he saw the military servitor, Ivan Kolov, at the monastery church. In short, several of the nuns appear to have been engaging in the theft of convent valuable, passing them to the Kozlov family to fence in Tiumen with Ivan Kolov. The Kozlovs' wagon loads of hay provided a cover to smuggle the stolen items out of the convent.

Later on, Petr Kozlov gave further testimony. He recalled an episode when he and his father, Luk Kozlov, set out with the nun Zinaida on the road to Irbit. Irbit was a well-known regional market town some 30 kilometers from the convent. En route, Zinaida told them to stop and collect five wool carpets from Ivan Kolov who wanted her to them to sell at the fair in Irbit. In Irbit, Zinaida sold and purchased supplies, traded the wool carpets made by Tiumen artisans for copper. After the day's trading, she directed Petr Kozlov to bring the copper from the market to the house of Ivan Kolov in Tiumen, instructing him to tell Kolov that she had sold all the carpets as he had asked. Then Zinaida returned to the monastery, apparently on her own. It is unclear whether the transaction of the carpets for copper was legitimate or whether it was instead elaborate ruse to conceal the ongoing theft of monastic property. It is probable that Kolov was

²⁷⁰ GATO (TOB) f. I156, op. 1, d. 893, (1751).

hoarding and selling copper, sometimes obtained illegally from the convent. Although copper had numerous uses, Tiumen was infamous for its counterfeit coin operations. This case suggests the Kozlovs, Ivan Kolov, and several of the nuns were all involved in a criminal conspiracy.

In light of the further revelations in the case, the ecclesiastical tribunal recognized that they might have made a mistake in finding Protopopov guilty of theft. Consequently, they modified his sentence. Instead exiling him to a far-off outpost on the Siberian frontier, they reassigned him to Turinsk to serve as a sexton at one of its local churches.

The record of the ecclesiastic investigation ends here, so we do not know what consequences, if any, the head nun Pelagiia and the sisters suffered, or Kolov and the Kozlovs, either. All of them had lied to the investigators in at least part of their testimony. Kolov, the Kozlovs, and some of the nuns under Pelagiia's authority had engaged in illegal activity, as well as inappropriate fraternization between monastics and lay people.²⁷¹

This particular case of theft at the Tiumen Uspenskii Convent shows monastic women entering into the daily life of the larger community. The nuns engaged in diverse commercial interactions with lay people, including men. They traveled a considerable distance to the market down to handle their business, whether legal or illegal, in the company of men. These activities left them open to charges of theft, corruption, and unseemly behavior. If the charges against the nuns were true, as the evidence suggests, then they turned to crime to fund the convent when state and public financial support was refused. Compared to a century earlier when abbesses in Siberian convents could successfully petition the tsar for funds, these monastic women chose to boldly coordinate with thieves to meet their economic needs. Their story illustrates the

²⁷¹ GATO (TOB), f. II56, op. 1, d. 893, *Delo o Tiumenskogo devichia monastyria o ponomare Grigore protopope i o nachalnitse togo monastyr' monakhiniu Pelage*, 1751, ll. 13.

undesirable, and morally compromised roles nuns sometimes assumed inside and outside of convent walls.

Following the monastic reforms under Catherine II, the Tiumen Uspenskii convent existed until approximately 1767. Subsequently, it was converted into the Uspenskii parish church to serve the surrounding community.

Tomsk Nikolskii Rozhdestvenskii Convent

The Tomsk Convent was established on lands donated by Cossack Leader Zinovii Litosov to the Alekseevskii Monastery in 1661, located in the upper part of the city near Tatar yurts. The Alekseevskii monastery occupied a prominent position, geographically and socially, in Tomsk; its sinodik recorded the names of deceased townspeople to assure their commemoration. The nuns of the Nikolo-Chudtvorskii Maiden's Monastery shared in this duty, speaking to their centrality to the founders of Tomsk.²⁷² At the insistence of a large number of widows in Tomsk, who were gathering at the men's monastery near the Ushaika River, the abbot and the Cossack Litosov forward to Metropolitan Kornilii of Tobol'sk a request to build a convent church. Metropolitan Kornili gave his permission and blessing, and construction began in 1671. Litosov's motives for his donations, as given in the Sinodik, lay in his remorse for his own sins and the sacrifice of so many lives in defending Tomsk from hostile native Siberians.²⁷³ The first explanation was typical for donors; the latter was unique to the Siberian frontier situation.

²⁷² D. N. Belikov, *Starinnye monastyri tomskago kraia*, (Tomsk: Tip. P. I. Makushina, 1898), 165. The author cites the majority of the information from the convent *Sinodik*, and the archives of the Alekseevskii Monastery.

²⁷³ Belikov, 165.

Evfrosiniia was the first recorded abbess of the convent; the Sinodik's entries are incomplete. Anfisa was abbess in 1683 when she and several nuns received "a certain amount of money from the *Prikaznaia Palata*"—that is, a substantial donation from the state.²⁷⁴ Head-nun Taisia and Abbess Aleksandra supervised the tonsure of nun Pelagiia in 1723; the preservation of this entry suggests that she was an important woman in her lay life. In the second half of the 1730s, Dominikia served as abbess, and another Anfisa at the beginning of the 1750s. The last abbess of the Tomsk convent was Abbess Olympiada Burmakina who was selected from among the sisters at the Eniseisk convent, and was transferred to Tomsk. This trajectory hints that no one among the nuns at that time were suitable candidates for the position of abbess—or at least that this was the perception of the archbishop and his staff. The number of nuns at the convent over the years cannot be reconstructed from extant records, except for 1712, when the *Sinodik* lists 30 nuns between the ages of 49 and 80.²⁷⁵

The few surviving petitions of women to take monastic vows provide a representative window into the ages, social status, and motivations of the rest. In 1721, the wife of a Tomsk customs officer, Iv' Starkova, petitioned to enter the convent because of her husband's bad behavior (*durnomu povedeniiu*), which was shaming her in the community. She not only offered her remaining days to monastic life, but also the income from her small shop, rents gathered from her house, and fees collected on her fishing rights. Her husband complained to the Tomsk commander Vasilii Kozlov that his wife refused to live with him, that is, putting the blame for their marital strife on her. However, the commandant ruled against Starkov, placed him in chains, and assigned all the familial property and holdings to his wife.²⁷⁶ There were also

²⁷⁴ Belikov, 166.

²⁷⁵ Belikov, 166.

²⁷⁶ Belikov, 166-167.

instances in which women were brought to the convent by their husbands against their will. Ivan Fedorov beat his wife in the gardens of the convent, and demanded that the abbess hold her in captivity at the convent. She was tonsured as the nun Pelagiia, but it is not clear if it was entirely against her will. She was able to send a petition to Tsar Peter I explaining how her husband had beat her, and that he had her tonsured against her will. She further complained he would not pay for the construction of her own monastic cell and the purchase of her monastic dress.²⁷⁷ Although Fedorov may have intended for his wife to become a prisoner of the convent, the nuns had no obligation to jail her. They had received no order from the government to do so, and they certainly would not have wanted to incur the expenses involved. The convent had every reason to support Pelagiia's petition. If the tsar released her from her involuntary monastic vows, she would leave the convent. If she remained nun, the tsar might well require her husband to pay the costs of her residence there, to judge from the decision in Starkova's case. Either way, both the convent and Pelagiia benefited.

There were also women who were refused entry at the convent. In 1723, Avdot'ia Fedorova, the widow of a Tomsk customs official, wanted to take vows as a nun, and a request was sent to Tobol'sk. However, Metropolitan Antonii allowed her to be admitted only as a novice (*belitsa*), with full monastic tonsure postponed for later consideration. The widow took up living at the convent at her own cost, and built a small house inside the gates of the convent.²⁷⁸ The convent population by 1740 was down to seven nuns with many elderly or infirm, when the then metropolitan, also named Antonii (Narozhitskii) (directed them to admit the unmarried daughter of a widowed church servitor. The metropolitan had dual goals here: to bolster the

²⁷⁷ Belikov, 167.

²⁷⁸ Belikov, 167.

ageing community of nuns at the convent, and to free the young woman's father so that he could take vows as a monk at the Tomsk Alekseevskii Monastery.²⁷⁹ When Metropolitan Pavel requested information on the number of nuns in 1762, the Abbess replied that she was the only nun, and that all other women were novices. As we have seen from the case of Avdot'ia Fedorova, these novices were not necessarily young women seeking a monastic vocation, but rather they often were older widows hoping for a comfortable retirement home.

In the first 20 years after the founding of the convent the nuns had to provide for themselves or relied on their families in the community for food, clothing, and other needs. The convent maintained its own garden plots, but it had no monastic peasants or land. Most nuns are described as living in modest to poor conditions. Most entered the convent with their own funds and they often built their own cells; those who did not have the financial means or outside support of relatives lived in cramped surroundings with several nuns sharing a cell. In 1739, Archimandrite Lavrentii described the convent as having "no stone cells, only six wooden ones, all are dilapidated and stand side-by-side, with a hospital the length of 18 *sazhens*, and width of 4 *sazhens*."²⁸⁰ At about 3500 square feet, the hospital was of substantial size, suggesting a large number of patients; whether they were incapacitated nuns or novices or charity patients is unknown.

At the beginning of the eighteenth-century financial support changed as the local economy improved, and each nun received 6 rubles in cash, and two chetverti, or 92 dry gallons of grain. In 1736, both cash and grain stipends were terminated, and nuns without the support of relatives in the community walked the streets of Tomsk, begging at house for alms. The Tobol'sk

²⁷⁹ Belikov, 167.

²⁸⁰ Belikov, 168. Hospital measurements: 1 sazhen = 7 feet, i.e., 126 ft. in length by 21 ft. in width.

metropolitan instructed Abbess Olympiada to stop the practice. The Alekseevskii Monastery had peasants and land, and so it was directed to provide to its sister convent 10 poods (approximately 160 kilograms) of flour per nun, but not to exceed a total of 100 poods. The convent had few donors outside of the nuns and their families. In 1738, Colonel Boris Seredinin gifted them 20 rubles, and in 1741 another 30 rubles. When money was short, the convent borrowed it. The Alekseevskii monastery and its associated women's convent signed a promissory note for a loan of 163 rubles from the Stanislaveev family of Tomsk. Another strategy was to try to collect on outstanding debts, as in the case of money owing from the Chadtskii Tatars.²⁸¹ It is unclear whether this the Tatars had borrowed this money from the convent and monastery, or whether instead they working as debt collectors for the Tomsk townsman or land owner who had lent the money in the first place. In addition to support for the nuns, the convent had to pay for the male clergy who served them. The church priest at the Tomsk convent annually received six rubles in cash and 145 dry tons in grain from the convent treasury. The other church servitors received no grain stipend, but annually the deacon was allotted 1 ruble and 80 kopecks, and the church sexton 60 kopecks.²⁸²

Similar to the majority of convents in Siberia, the Tomsk Rozhdestvenskii Convent no longer received to state support after 1764, and it was ordered to close. Many of the elderly nuns continued to live at the convent until 1777, when presumably the last of the nuns passed away. However, the convent was still being used as a prison in 1778, when three prisoners (*kolodniki*) were being held there.

Tarskii Paraskevo-Piatnitskii Convent

²⁸¹ Belikov, 170.

²⁸² Belikov, 171.

The convent of named in honor of Saint Paraskeva Piatnitsa was established nearly 400 kilometer south of Tobol'sk at the Tara settlement on the Irtysh River in 1624 at the direction of Archbishop Kiprian. Little is known about the population of the convent or its activities. The Russian settlement at Tara was established in 1594; it lay on the route between Tobol'sk and Tomsk, later known as the "Tea Road." because of the trade with China. A town already existed at that spot under the Siberian Khanate, and it served in a similar role as a transit center for trade. The Tatar town was located on the Tara River, but the Russian settlers later moved it to a hill overlooking the banks Irtysh River for defensive reasons and because of problems with flooding. These problems continued under Russian rule due to the population's rapid expansion in the contested spaces of the Kazakh steppe. In 1624, there were 263 households (*dvori*) in Tara and the total population was approximately 1,300 people, composed of mostly Tatars.

When the Paraskevo-Piatnitskii Convent was established in 1624, it was the only monastic space in Tara. The physical layout of the town was compact, and densely built inside and around its fortress on the border of Kazakh steppe lands. In 1669, a fire destroyed 380 courtyards, as well as the fortress and its watchtowers. The Piatnitskii and Spasskii churches also burned down, and presumably the convent as well. At the end of the seventeenth century, the town was rebuilt. The overgrown settlement spread outside the fortress walls, and an earthen wall was constructed for additional defense. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the population of Tara numbered more than 3,000 people. But the lack of measures to regulate the growth of the town resulted in considerable destruction during a second fire in 1709, when 380 courtyards burned down in the walled town, 300 outside, and 29 Tatar yurts.²⁸³ A unified urban

²⁸³ Iu. M. Goncharov, and A. R. Ivonin, *Ocherki istorii goroda Tary kontsa XVI-nachala XX vv.*, (Barnaul: "Azbuka", 2010); S. A. Alferov, et. al., *Khramy v krepostnykh stenakh: konfessional'naia istoriia goroda Tary: monografiia*, (Omsk: Nauka, 2014).

plan was established in 1775 to facilitate fire safety and overland transit routes, as well as measures for the drainage of wetlands, and flood control along the Irtysh and Arkarna rivers.²⁸⁴ The difficult conditions on the steppe created hardships for the entire community, including its monastic women. Their persistence demonstrates their determination to maintain visible markers of a Russian in contested frontier spaces.

EASTERN SIBERIA

Eniseisk Khristo-Rozhdestvenskii Convent

The Khristo-Rozhdestvenskii Convent in Eniseisk was founded in 1623 under the authority of the first Siberian Archbishop Kiprian. It was the first monastic space in Eastern Siberia.²⁸⁵ Its founding nun, Paraskeva Plemiannikova, was a resident of Eniseisk who came to Siberia from Nizhnii Novgorod. The monastery was located on the left bank of the Enisei, at the mouth of the Melnichna and Lazarevka rivers. Originally, it was a small hermitage of women, but with the support of local clerks, servitors and the boyar I. S Kurakin, its territory was expanded, cells and a fence were built, and the nun Paraskeva became the first abbess.

In the early 1650s, the monastery constructed a wooden church in honor of the Nativity of the Mother of God, and in 1672 a second church in honor of the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God. By 1679, 26 elder nuns lived in the women monastery. In its first 50 years, the monastery was able to acquire land and establish farming, controlling some 1460 desiatins (about 3800 acres) of land near Eniseisk.²⁸⁶ According to monastery records, 29 peasant families

²⁸⁴ S. F. Tatarurov, and S. S. Tikhonov, "Osobennosti planigrafii i blagoustroistva Sibirskogo goroda v XVI-XVIII vv.," *Vestnik arkheologii, antropologii i etnografii*, No. 3 (38), 2017: 41-50.

²⁸⁵ Dulov and Sannikov, Section 01-3.

²⁸⁶ N. I. Drozdov and V. S. Borovets, *Eniseiskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, (Krasnoyarsk: KOO Assotsiatsiia "Russkaia entsiklopediia," 1998), 227.

worked the monastic estates of Elanskaia and Ust-Lavrentievskaiia. Both villages had a mill and granary. Subsequently, in 1642, the Spasskii men's monastery was founded near Eniseisk, but unlike the women's monastery, it had land grants in the first decades of its existence. In 1646, only 6 monks lived in the monastery, and they complained that "the monastery does not have any arable land and patrimonies and no factories; the old men have nothing to sustain them and no one goes to the monastery."²⁸⁷ Clearly, then, the local authorities preferred to invest in the women's monastery, rather than in the men's. Once Varlaam, the first abbot of the monastery, was appointed in 1649, a wooden church dedicated to the Savior was built at the monastery. The economy of the men's monastery began to develop and the number of monks significantly increased with 53 "elders" living in the monastery in 1679. Now possessing arable lands, the monastery operated grain mills in the monastic villages, sustaining themselves and the local population. Similar to many other Siberian towns, these first monasteries conducted a wide trade in bread, fish, and fur, and attracted investors and merchants in the region.

Irkutsk Znamenskii Convent

In the late 1680s, Metropolitan Pavel approved the establishment of a convent in Irkutsk. The construction of the Znamenskii Convent progressed slowly, and the metropolitan had to appoint a new builder. He named the wealthy merchant Vlas Sidorov, who invested his own funds to build the Znamenskii Church where nuns were gathering. By 1693, the church was complete, as well as six cells for the nuns, but the main convent building was not finished until the last years of the 1690s. To set the convent on good financial footing—and to get his debt for

²⁸⁷ O. V. Protopop, "Eniseiskie monastyri," *Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, Vyp. IX*, Krasnoyarsk, 2004, 356.

building it repaid--Sidorov transferred six peasant households from the Kitoi settlement, acquired a mill, secured fishing rights on the Angara River, and helped to establish a tannery. The annual income of the convent in the 1690s was approximately 300 rubles, which was generated through trade in Chinese goods as well as their other industries.

But the relationship between Vlas Sidorov and the nuns proved tense. In 1697, the head nun Kiriakiia and the sisters accused him of "frantic living and negligence," and "that he was a greedy monastic treasurer and supplied his relatives with money, and lent and sold debts." Sidorov was removed from the post of monastic builder.²⁸⁸ The conflict was resolved in 1698, when a group of influential Cossacks and the de-facto military governor of Irkutsk, Cossack Ivan Perfil'ev, sent a petition to the metropolitan of Tobol'sk In their testimony of support for Sidorov, the Cossacks also maligned the nun Kiriakiia, and stated that, "in the world, she was an exiled wife and a known thief, and in the [sic] monastery she has all the trappings of wealth." The metropolitan responded with an acquittal of charges, and he reinstated Vlas Sidorov as monastic builder. In Siberia, and likely elsewhere, the use of monastic and church treasury funds as borrowed capital was commonplace, and it was often carried out for the benefit of the monastery or church. That is not to say that Sidorov did not make a profit, but he reasonably expected his investment in building the convent church to be treated as a loan rather than a gift. Sidorov clearly benefited from his Cossack connection in Irkutsk, while the nuns were blamed for false slander. The fate of nun Kiriakia, and the other sisters involved in the matter with church builder Sidorov is unknown, but in 1704, she was passed over as a candidate for abbess.

²⁸⁸ A. V. Dulov and A. P. Sannikov, Section 01-3.

Tobol'sk metropolitan Filofei Leschinskii confirmed another nun, Akulina, who served as head of the Znamenskii Convent for forty years, until her death in 1744.²⁸⁹

Siberian convents served as prisons, and the Znamenskii convent in Irkutsk filled this role, as did Dalmatov (to be studied in depth in another chapter). The prisoners at Znamenski came from families at the highest levels of Russian society. Either the women themselves, or their family members were accused of high crimes and treason against the Russian sovereign. One was Anna Volynskaia, the daughter of Artemii Volynskii, a diplomat to Persia, statesman and once governor of Astrakhan (1718-1723) and Kazan (1728-1730). He was executed in St. Petersburg after found guilty for taking part in the plot against Grand Chamberlain Ernst Johann von Biron, the favorite of Empress Anna Ioannovna. Anna was 17 years old when she was taken to the Znamenskii Convent and was tonsured as nun the Anisiia in November 1740. Another daughter, Maria, age 15, was also forcibly tonsured as the nun Mariamna; sent to the Eniseisk Rozhdestvenskii Convent the same year. Their brother Petr was exiled to Selenginsk to serve in the Bucholtz Brigade on the Chinese border.²⁹⁰ When Empress Elizabeth succeed to the throne in 1741, she absolved the Volynskiis of guilt in the conspiracy, and pardoned the children. In 1742 Anna was released from her vows and freed. Local legends in Irkutsk recounted that Anna sent an altar Gospel, a costly item, as a donation to the monastery.²⁹¹ If she in fact did so, possibly it was at the insistence of her benefactress, Empress Elizabeth.

²⁸⁹ Dulov and Sannikov, Section 02-3.

²⁹⁰ "Nevol'naia postrizhennitsa," *Irkutskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti*, "Pribavleniia," No. 27, 6 June 1868, 331-335.

²⁹¹ *Letopis' goroda Irkutska XVII-XIX vv.*, ed. N. V. Kulikauskene (Irkutsk: Vostochno Sibirskoe, 1996), 184-185.

The economic situation of the Znamenskii Convent in the first half of the eighteenth century remained stable, and its monastic possessions were quite impressive. In 1728, the monastery owned the Kitoi village and eight other location with winter quarters. Seven were across the Angara River at Dolganovo, Khromovo, Molodovo, Khomutovo, Shcheglovo, Gnilokurovskoe, Nikolskoe; and one near Lake Baikal at Listvenichnoe. Additionally, the convent owned hay fields near the Ushakovka River. The main source of income for the monastery was its landed estate in the Kitoi settlement. This settlement alone included 33 *desiatins* of farmland (approximately 70 acres); 120 peasants lived in the village in 27 households, and three grain mills were in operation. At the time of the inventory, the Kitoi settlement had 30 bags of rye; this could not have been its total production, but rather its current stored supply. None of this rye was designated for the nuns. The Kitoi herds numbered 75 head of horse, 90 head of cattle, and 35 head of sheep.²⁹² The corporate economic resources of the convent were notable, however the common monastic property of the nuns appears meager in comparison. In 1728, 12 sisters were living at the convent, including Abbess Akulina who was 65; the youngest was 55, and the oldest was 85, with the average age of the nuns at 70. Irkutsk eparchial documents indicate that nuns were illiterate, except for the Abbess.²⁹³ Common monastic property of the convent included 37 rubles in the treasury, 8 poods of wax, 5 poods of incense, 10 poods of hops, 4 bundles of yellow nankeen cotton, 3 bundles of white cotton, and 10 tanned fleece hides.

In the years between 1728 and 1764, not only did the possessions and wealth of the convent increase, but also the material conditions for the nuns at Znamenskii. When state

²⁹² *Irkutskie Eparkhal'nye Vedomosti*, No. 50, "Pribavlenie," (Irkutsk, 1863), 831.

²⁹³ *Irkutskie Eparkhal'nye Vedomosti*, No. 50, "Pribavlenie," 832.

monastic reform began in 1764, the convent held 335 monastic peasants, who paid not only dues for the land but also rents for winter quarters of livestock, hay mowing, fishing, and breweries. Income totalled about 300 rubles annually.²⁹⁴ Monastic property in the Kitoi village included livestock herds –100 horses, 150 head of cattle, and 120sheep--and grain holdings - 3,290 pounds of rye, 1,391 pounds of wheat, 653 pounds of barley, 46 pounds of oats, 2 pounds of millet, 2 pounds of hemp seed, 23 pounds of rye flour, 9 pounds of wheat flour, 15 pounds of barley grain, and 10 pounds of oatmeal.²⁹⁵

Despite these substantial economic resources, in 1764 only a small group of aging monastic personnel were living at the Znamenskii Convent. The residents consisted of the abbess, five nuns, two married priests, and a deacon. Each one possessed substantial personal wealth, as indicated in the detailed enumeration of their possessions produced in connection with the 1764 inventory.

1. Abbess Anna Istlent'eva, wife of retired of syn-boyarskii Dorofei Kondratov; tonsured in 1746; consecrated as abbess in 1762 by the Irkutsk Spiritual Consistory; issued no money stipend; issued 20 arshins of linen; 2 bolts of yellow nankeen cotton cloth plus another full bolt; 2 pairs of shoes; an outer vestment of silk sewn with gold thread, with a silk belt; and food supplied by the refectory; age 62.
2. Nun Venedikta, unmarried priest's daughter; tonsured in 1742; skills: spins yarn and weaves lace; in 1763 the abbess granted her [these] articles - 5 arshins of coarse linen, 2 bolts of yellow nankeen cotton, plus half bolt; food supplied in the refectory, age 67.
3. Nun Elisaveta Rupysheva, widow of Iakutsk Regiment captain; tonsured in 1742; skills: spin yarns, knits stockings and mittens at the convent; 24 poods of rye flour, 3 poods of wheat flour, 3 poods of rye malt, 1 pood and 20 funt of ground barley, 1 pood and 20 funt of salt; articles supplied: 10 arshins of linen, 2 bolts of yellow nankeen cotton plus half a bolt, 1 pair of shoes; age 85.

²⁹⁴ Dulov and Sannikov, Section 02-3.

²⁹⁵ *Irkutskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti*, No. 14, "Pribavlenie," (Irkutsk, 1890), 1-6.

4. Nun Iul'ianiia Svirskikh, unmarried daughter of a townsman; tonsured in 1742; assigned to various monastery duties; skills: spins yarn; food supplied in the refectory; articles supplied: 5 arshins of linen, 2 bolts of nankeen cotton plus half a bolt, 1 pair of shoes; age 46.
5. Nun Akulina Popova, wife of Irkutsk Cossack leader; tonsured in 1762, but has lived at the convent for the past 17 years because she is old and infirm and has no one to care for her; from the convent treasury she annually receives 24 poods of rye flour, 3 poods of wheat flour, 3 poods of rye malt, 1 pood and 20 funt of ground barley; 1 pood and 20 funt of salt; 1 pair of shoes; age 87.
6. Nun Elena Lebedeva, merchant's wife; tonsured in 1762, but she has been at the convent for 10 years; skills: sews vestments; she receives the same stipend and articles as nun Popova age 58.
7. Married Priest Maksim Nikitin (Kolodeznikov), sent to the convent by the Irkutsk Spiritual Consistory in 1760. From the convent treasury his yearly stipend: 12 rubles, 100 poods of rye flour, 3 poods of ground barley, 5 pounds of fresh fish, and a cow.
8. Married Priest Aleksei Karpov (Sotnikov), sent to the convent by the Irkutsk Spiritual Consistory in 1761; same stipend as Priest Nikitin.
9. Deacon Dmitrii Sotnikov, from a priest's family, not appointed [by the Irkutsk Spiritual Consistory]. From the convent treasury annual stipend: 6 rubles, 50 poods of flour, 1 pood and 20 funt of ground barley, 2 ½ poods of fresh fish, and half a cow.²⁹⁶

Certain characteristics of the Znamenskii convent are evident from this enumeration. The nuns came from a variety of social orders, although none from the peasantry or the indigenous population. Some were widows and others never married. Two had taken up residence at the convent long before they took vows as a nun, indicating that the convent served as a refuge or retirement facility.

²⁹⁶ *Irkutskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti*, No. 26, "Pribavlennii," (Irkutsk, 1890), 1-4. Measurements: (1 pood = 16.8 kg); (1 funt = 409.5 grams); (arshin = .71 meters).

Each nun, except Iul'iania, received as specified amount of foodstuffs as her due. Some of the amounts—Akulina's 1 pood and 20 funt of salt, for example—were so large as to indicate that they were not intended for the nun's personal consumption, but rather provided her with a resource she could sell for her support. All the nuns had needlework skills, which they presumably used to help support themselves and the convent.

Even though the convent had very few nuns, it employed two priests and a deacon. This suggests that the convent churches also served as parish churches. The resources of the convent provided these male clergy and their families with a significant supplement to their income, which would have come from the fees paid by their lay parishioners.

Based on the land holding, livestock and rents, the economic situation at the convent continued to appear stable, yet the convent population of the convent had declined sharply. Irkutsk Archbishop Sofronii applied to the Synod, which sent to Irkutsk a new abbess, treasurer, and 14 nuns who arrived in 1770.²⁹⁷ However, the difficult times for the convent did not end, as two fires destroyed a large number of convent buildings in 1781 and 1787. Irkutsk Metropolitan Veniamin and city dwellers provided assistance to the convent. In 1791-1792, merchant wife Tatiana Sizykha made significant donations, funding the construction of a brick and mortar enclosure around the convent, cells for the nuns, hospital quarters, and prison chambers at the convent.²⁹⁸ When the wealthy sea merchant Grigorii Shelhikov, who had explored of the Kuril and Kodiak Islands, died in 1795, his wife Natalia had a marble bust and his portrait installed at

²⁹⁷ N. Torshina, "Znamenskii monastyr'," *Zemlia Irkutskaia*, (Irkutsk, 1998), No. 10, 25. First accessed on March 12, 2019 http://irkipedia.ru/content/znamenskiy_monastyr_istoriya.

²⁹⁸ *Irkutskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti*, No. 17, "Pribavlenie," (Irkutsk, 1890), 3.

the convent, and also gave a significant endowment.²⁹⁹ The financial records of the convent between 1794-1797 reported 5,123 rubles in expenditures, and nearly the same amount of income. Some 4,000 rubles were spent on the construction the brick wall enclosing the convent, so with 80 percent or more of the convent's funds tied up in construction, Natalia Shelikova's endowment was a significant source of income.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the convent was constantly under construction, primarily financed by wealthy Irkutsk merchants. The original Znamenskii church where the nuns first gather in the 1680s was replaced with a stone church. In 1757, the Irkutsk merchant, tavern mogul, and investor in trade exploration of the Aleutian Islands, Ivan Bechevin, promised to fund construction projects at Znamenskii, but he was unable to complete them. He had financed the building of two other stone churches in Irkutsk, so clearly, he was a man of means. But in 1758, Bechevin came under investigation on charges of tax evasion, along with some other Irkutsk merchants. He was charged with cheating the state treasury of its legitimate tax income by selling wine for 1 ruble or more per barrel, while paying tax on profits based on the price of 50-60 kopecks per barrel. The investigation was headed by the collegiate assessor from St. Petersburg, Petr Krylov, sent to Irkutsk by the chief procurator of the Senate Alexander Glebov. At first Bechevin, despite torture (held in chains, and flogged), denied all the accusations raised against him. But later, under more extreme torture on the rack (*dyba*), he promised to pay Krylov a "redemption" (*otkupnuiu*) of 15 thousand rubles, after which he was released. He increased the size of the bribe to 30 thousand rubles.³⁰⁰ Bechevin's torture and

²⁹⁹ *Irkutskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti*, No. 17, "Pribavlenie," (Irkutsk, 1890), 4-5. See also for merchant wives in Siberia at the end of the 18th c. – E. A. Zueva, *Russakaia kupecheskaia sem'ia v Sibiri kontsa XVIII-pervoi poloviny XIX v.*, (Novosibirsk, 2007).

³⁰⁰ A. S. Zuev, "Ivan Stepanovich Bechevin (Bichevich)," *Istoricheskaia entsiklopediia Sibiri*, *Institut istorii SO RAN*, (Novosibirsk: "Istoricheskoe nasledie Sibiri," 2009), t. 1 (A –I), 201; T.

period in custody (possibly at the convent) ultimately led to his death in December 1759.

Understandably, Bechevin's family did not continue funding construction at the convent, and the Irkutsk Eparchy finished paying for the completion of the Znamenskii church.³⁰¹

In the last half of the eighteenth-century, wealthy benefactors of the convent included merchants, explorers, and also affluent women of Irkutsk. Their donations helped to support the convent. It is clear that the Znamenskii convent was a dynamic economic center in Irkutsk and Eastern Siberia before and after state monastery reforms in 1764. It was designated as the only remaining convent in the Irkutsk Eparchy after 1764. The significant wealth gained through its land holdings, and trade activity stands out among all convents (and possibly male monasteries) in Siberia during the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION - ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN SIBERIAN CONVENTS

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a resurgence of female religious life manifested in Female religious life in Siberia in the form of the rapid growth of convents; this occurred throughout Russia including in Siberia. William Wagner credits nineteenth-century growth to "a period of adaptive development" for female monasticism and the "democratization" or social leveling of the female monastic estate due to the social changes after the emancipations of serfs in 1861. Monastic life for women was attractive for several reasons - increased status and purpose associated with religious life, attraction to education, desire to remain near relatives,

A. Kriuchkova, *Zemlia Irkutskaiia*, (Irkutsk, 1996), No. 5, 65, 70-71, First accessed on March 12, 2019

http://irkipedia.ru/content/userdiem_i_kapitalom_o_mecenatstve_pri_stroitelstve_irkutskih_cerkvey .

³⁰¹ In the month before his death, Bechevin managed to fully equip the expedition to the Aleutian Islands, and paid for the "St. Gabriel" expedition that headed east in 1760 east from Kamchatka, but left the convent unfunded.

and a familiar rural setting. Other motives were fueled by the social imbalance of men choosing to migrating out of village communities, and aversion to marriage or urban living.³⁰²

The same circumstances held true for was also tSiberian convents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Under similar socio-economic circumstances in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Siberia, social leveling and adaptation was also a primary catalyst in drawing women to monastic life. This phenomenon appears to be a persistent feature of female monasticism during periods of social change, or when the convents were organized along coenobitic lines, as in eighteenth-century Siberia, and in European Russia after 1861. In a few instances, affluent Siberian families provided financial maintenance funds for their daughters who took monastic vows, in order to permit them to enter convents that lacked the budgetary resources to accommodate them otherwise.³⁰³ These requests for admission of new novices were prior to 1764 reforms, and were granted on a limited basis.

The nineteenth century is also generally considered the period when female monasticism turned from the contemplative life to an active life of religious vocation.³⁰⁴ Like the phenomena of adaptive development, the conditions in eighteenth-century Siberia were also conducive to promoting practical skills among nuns, rather than reflective, inward-looking monastic life. Similarly, to the late nineteenth century, education was a motive for women to enter convents in eighteenth-century Siberia. Novices educated at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in the early eighteenth century contributed to establishing an informal school, which resulted in the literacy

³⁰² William Wagner, "The Transformation of Female Orthodox Monasticism in Nizhnii Novgorod Diocese, 1764-1929, in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (December 2006), 795, 806.

³⁰³ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 1145, *Delo o postrizhenii v monakhini docheri upravitelia Alakaevskogo zavoda Nastas'i, 1752*, ll. 1-7.

³⁰⁴ Wagner, 819.

rate of 27 percent of all nuns, who came mainly from peasant households. This level of literacy greatly exceeded that of women in general in Russia.³⁰⁵ All nuns the Znamenskii Convent in Irkutsk and at Dalmatov possessed needlework skills, in some cases highly specialized ones. It is likely that they learned these techniques at the convents.³⁰⁶

In order to be models of Orthodoxy and useful imperial subjects on the Siberian frontier, nuns need to do more than contemplate the divine in the privacy of their individual cells and the convent church. Monastic women were fully integrated in their community, and actively influenced the development of religious, economic and political life. Although female monasteries were often associated with male monasteries, they were not necessarily subordinate to them economically. Many Siberian convents did not own patrimonial lands (*votchina*) with their dependent peasants, but they were entitled to the necessary financial support from the male monasteries that had expansive land holdings. Monastic women frequently outnumbered men by a substantial margin, and they provided the labor to work agricultural lands. In addition, convents that held their own lands administered them independently.

The influence of monastic women on the economic activity of the surrounding region was significant, whether or not they owned land outright. Convents governed themselves internally, even when they relied on men to conduct official correspondence with ecclesiastical authorities. Female monastics often established their own commercial relationships with locals based on the urban or rural environments in which they found themselves. Unlike Western European religious women of the cloister, nuns in Russia had a long tradition of living in the

³⁰⁵ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 653, *Ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskon monastyriakh* (1760-1761), ll. 78ob.-83;

³⁰⁶ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 520, *Kniga ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskom monastyriakh* (1755), ll. 6 ob.-11.

world. Their secular activities included conducting business at local and regional markets, and in the caring for displaced persons in ways that served the larger community.

In addition to the economic and caretaking roles, monastic women also interacted with penitents, exiles, lawbreakers, and delinquents. Even prior to the official use of Siberia as a place of exile after 1649, the Siberian frontier was a coarse locality of transient populations and limited government presence. In these social circumstances, monastic women lived and worked, fully integrating themselves into frontier life that gradually became settled from the seventeenth to the end eighteenth centuries. The Church and state envisioned these female monastics and other respectable wives and daughters to be a part of the order and stabilizing influence. Unlike women in Western imperial expansion, who were held back until after the messy business of empire-building was complete and their “civilizing” influence was desired, Russian women advanced into Siberia from the beginning, unrestrained by the bonds of propriety.

In the fledgling communities on the Siberian frontier, men were often absent due to frequent travel under dangerous circumstances conducting commercial ventures or state service. In many case men did not return from their travels, leaving women either unmarried or widowed. Some native women converted to Orthodoxy to marry, but their absent husbands left them isolated from their own people, and they took refuge in women’s monastic communities Others, newly baptized Orthodox native women, sought out monastic life as a means of escaping undesirable family circumstances created by Russian rule. The comparative absence of serfdom in Siberia also meant that there were more women who were free to take monastic vows. If post-Reform disruption can be credited with the “democratization” of the monastic estate, then the lack of serfdom in Siberia served a similar role that influenced the social composition of monasteries and convents beyond the Urals.

CHAPTER 6 - THE DALMATOV VVEDENSKII CONVENT

Women's monastic communities remained persistent fixtures in a mobile environment of settlement and instability, with the task of reinforcing the continuity of Russian cultural, economic and political forms on the Siberian frontier. The lived experience of monastic women in Siberia presents a contrasting picture of control and power within a hierarchy of gender roles, reflecting the convergence of gender with the expanse of empire. The roles and activities of nuns exceeded the boundaries that confined women in secular communities. Monastic life was desirable for women, as they could devote themselves to spiritual excellence on a par with men while escaping the constant oversight of men in daily life, and avoiding the dangers of pregnancy and spousal abuse.

This chapter will investigate life at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in the mid-eighteenth century, detailing the rhythms of monastic life for women and the particular economic and social roles they played in the development of Russian rule in Siberia. William Wagner's study of eighteenth-century female monasticism at Nizhnii Novgorod, emphasized the experiences of women were not only shaped by monastic reform in the eighteenth century, but were equally shaped by their institution and environment.³⁰⁷ I argue that female monastic experience at Dalmatov and at other convents located east of the Ural Mountains was equally shaped by its social, economic and political circumstances, in which women were positioned to function as moral exemplars of Orthodoxy, monastic jailors, and administrators of monastic estates that placed them as unique agents of empire in Siberia.

³⁰⁷ William G. Wagner, "Female Orthodox Monasticism in Eighteenth-Century Imperial Russia: The Experience of Nizhnii Novgorod," in *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn and Alessandra Tosi, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 191-218.

This sketch of the administration, composition, and lived experience of women in Siberian convents draws upon records from the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in the context of other convents in Siberia.

The Dalmatov Vvedenskii convent and its companion male institution, the Dalmatov Uspenskii monastery, serve as an example of monastic communities in Siberia. The Vvedenskii convent was officially founded in 1680, from among the women who apparently already lived at the Dalmatov Uspenskii men's monastery, which had been founded in 1644. Dalmat's original collection of acolytes (as described in Chapter 3) likely included both men and women where monks and nuns lived together in one monastery for some time. Despite canon law, and the prohibitions introduced by Siberian Archbishop Kiprian in the 1620s, security concerns about raiding Kalmyks, Bashkirs and Siberian Tatars dictated the pragmatic living arrangements of monastic men and women at Dalmatov. In this circumstance, the founding of the women's monastery in 1680 likely meant the split of a previously co-ed monastery into two separate houses, one for men and one for women. Abbot Isaak tonsured 45-year-old Irina Durganova as its first abbess in 1681.³⁰⁸

The location of both the men's and the women's monasteries of Dalmatov has been a matter of confusion. Recent accounts and church histories confuse the convent in the eighteenth century located in the village Verkhniaia Techa with its geographical place at the time of its founding at the end of the seventeenth century.³⁰⁹ Archival records show that it was co-located near the men's monastery on the confluence of the Iset and Techa Rivers until a fire in 1742

³⁰⁸ Plotnikov, *Opisanie*, 93.

³⁰⁹ *Vestnik Ekaterinburgskoi dukhovnoi seminarii*, Vol. 2 (6), 2013.

destroyed the convent, which was then rebuilt 40 kilometers away on the upper Techa River.³¹⁰

Yet, all administrative functions and spiritual support was overseen by the men's monastery whose hieromonks traveled to the Vvedenskii convent to administer the sacraments, hear confessions, tonsure nuns, and report on the behavior of female penitents. Later official accounts, written in the nineteenth century, obscured monastic activity at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii women's convent because canon law forbade mixed-sex monastic houses. The goal was to establish the piety of the "Russian Thebaid" in Siberia, and such violations of canon law, and propriety could not be part of the story.

The convent was located in the countryside, rather than in a town, as in the case of some of the institutions surveyed in the previous chapter. It followed a coenobitic structure, with communal residence, prayer, and meals. Its main source of income was agricultural, from its lands and peasants. Dalmatov does not appear to have been a pilgrimage destination for benefactors from European Russia. Although it received large endowments by clerical officials and prominent patrons in the late seventeenth century, as detailed in Chapter 3, they had all but dried up by the eighteenth century. Local donors gave meager gifts in kind for the nuns, and passed on used belongings to the poor. In general, the state was its greatest benefactor, when it chose to be. Despite the indifference and reluctance of local military governors, the state assessed the situation in the region and generally responded positively to requests for land grants.³¹¹ Thereafter, the convent was expected to provide for its own needs, and garner the support of the local community, if it could. The founding of monasteries and convents certainly

³¹⁰ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 247, *Perepiska Tobol'skoi konsistorii s nastoiatelem Sil'vestrom o pozharakh v muzhskom i zhenskome monastyriakh*, 1742-1743, ll. 1-16.

³¹¹ L. A. Tresviatskii, "Sibirskie monastyri v XVII veke," *Filosofia v XXI veke: mezhdunarodnyi sbornik nauchnikh trudov*, vol. 10, (Voronezh: VGPU, 2006), 75-80.

represented the ideological and cultural component of empire, but more practically monasteries were established as landed estates alongside peasant settlement in new territories. As geographic markers, and a symbol of the Russian state, monastic spaces bound communities together, but also integrated the land and its imperial subjects under the protection of God and the tsar.

DALMATOV MONASTERY REGISTERS

Eighteenth-century monastery registers provide historians with valuable administrative and demographic information. The surviving Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent registers from 1755 to 1761 document a fairly large population of women, which provided a view into the little known details of monastic life.³¹² They speak to the monastic structures of the convent, as well as the varied age, social origins, ethnicity, literacy, and skills of the nuns, as well as the circumstances of their taking monastic vows. The monastic women at Dalmatov, and in other convents in Siberia, interacted with ecclesiastical and state authorities, as well as dependent lay populations of peasants and exiles inhabiting monastery-owned lands. These local networks display how monastic women personally performed Orthodoxy on the frontier, and subsisted as an integral part of Russian territorial expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

All monasteries and convents were required to provide the Holy Synod a detailed list of its inhabitants, accounting for names, dates and places of birth, social rank of the family, current age, the age when monastic vows were taken, how long resident at the current monastery or

³¹² The years from 1755-1761 (missing 1758) are the available registers from the archive of the Dalmatov Monastery. The final destination of the registers was the Holy Synod, so the archive at RGIA may hold a more complete account. The Uspenskii monastery sent their registers to the Tobol'sk Spiritual Consistory, as noted in the record, and a future comparison may reveal the level of compliance by the Siberian Eparchy.

convent, where monastic vows were taken, their function in the community, and any skill or handicraft they possessed.³¹³ The records kept at Dalmatov at times exceeded the basic reporting requirement, at least for the men's monastery, and included the monks' places of ordination as priests, previous parishes, status as widowers, the specific name of Archimandrite who tonsured them, and the Metropolitan who conferred their rank.³¹⁴ These additional details showed that the ordained hieromonks were accounted for, and were neither vagrant nor fraudulent clerics.

The Dalmatov monastery archive contains 1755-1761, except for 1758, which is also missing along with all other registers recorded from the 1720s until the convent's dissolution sometime in the 1770s. The extant records only provide a partial picture, and much of the data gathered by monastery officials relied upon registers from previous years that were recopied. Where deficiencies were found the reports had to rely on the memory and reliability of the residents themselves.

The monastic registers provide information on the performance of Orthodoxy in Siberia during a period of oppressive reform and modernization, and testify to the role female monastic administrators played in deferring the drastic reduction of monastic personnel.

Personnel of Dalmatov

In 1755, the convent listed 49 nuns compared with the 14 monks that lived at the Uspenskii Monastery.³¹⁵ There were some fluctuations in the number of monastics over the six-year period, but female monastics consistently outnumbered their male counterparts. In the years surveyed, nuns outnumbered monks four to one, except in 1757, when the ratio was over six to

³¹³ *PSPR*, t. 2, No. 626, 295-296; and *PSZ*, t. 6, No. 4015.

³¹⁴ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 520, 533, 555, 609, and 653.

³¹⁵ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 520, *Kniga ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskom monastyriakh* (1755), ll. 1-11.

one.³¹⁶ In Russia as a whole, the ratios were far different: there were twenty-five percent more monks than nuns in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.³¹⁷ Still, it is important to consider that when comparing overall number of female to male monastic in Russia in the first half of the eighteenth century (before 1764) is problematic, as most of the compiled statistics have either excluded Siberia and other regions, or have inaccurately accounted for their numbers.³¹⁸ Regardless of the exclusion of Siberia, the overall monastic population in Russia likely remained relatively stable during the fourteen years recorded in the Dalmatov registers, and there is reason to believe this remained the case in the 1750s and 1760s.

In Russia as a whole, the number of men's monasteries also exceeded convents by nearly twenty percent. While each women's convent tended to have a larger number of monastic inhabitants than each men's monastery, the wealth associated with land endowments were considerably less. The large and renowned Novodevichii Convent in Moscow was supported by the land endowment from 2,346 elite households, compared to the Troitskii-Sergiev Monastery supported by 20, 333 elite households. Men's monasteries also fared better when monastic income was partially restored in 1722, with stipends (*dacha* or *ruga*) for 52 monasteries compared to 15 convents.³¹⁹ Dalmatov's composition and property ideally should be compared with other Siberian institutions, but currently, there are no separate calculations regarding the

³¹⁶ In 1756 (47 nuns to 13 monks) – GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 533; in 1757 (44 nuns to 7 monks) – GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 555; no record for 1758; in 1759 (45 nuns to 12 monks) – GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 609; in 1760 (47 nuns to 12 monks); and in 1761 (47 nuns to 14 monks) – both years found in GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 653.

³¹⁷ Emchenko, 258-259.

³¹⁸ Emchenko estimates use numbers from Ia. E. Vodarskii, *Vladeniiia i krepostnyi krest'iane pusskoi tservki v kontse XVII veka*, (Moscow: Akademii Nauka SSSR, 1988), 133, 136; and I. K. Smolich, *Russkoe Monashestvo 988-1917*, (Moscow: Tsekovno-Nauchnyi Tsentr "Provoslavnaia Entsiklopediia," 1999), tab. XI, 563.

³¹⁹ Emchenko, 259.

precise income or endowments of Siberian monasteries or convents. The previous chapter provides an impression of human and economic resources of monasteries elsewhere in Siberia that can serve as a basis for preliminary comparison.

As detailed in Chapter 3, Dalmatov housed an office of *inkvizitsiia*, established in 1723, which kept an account of confessional records of monastics and local church parishes as part of regulations governing the duty, discipline, and service of the clergy.³²⁰ This role helps to explain the number of monks there. A small cadre of hieromonks, a hierodeacon along with a few novices and the Archimandrite made up the population of the monastery, which never numbered over 14, and averaged around 12 monks dedicated to administrative duties in the years surveyed (1755-1761). Beginning in 1723, no less than six monks at the Dalmatov monastery were designated as “provincial inquisitors.” As the “eyes and ears” of Peter’s *Spiritual Regulation* their duties often took them to Moscow and Tobol’sk receiving instructions and submitting reports. The presence inquisitors at Dalmatov not only took male monastic away from the daily administration of monastic lands, but also further intruded into the lives of monastery personnel.

The number of hieromonks may seem extraordinary for a small monastic group, but it is likely that the Dalmatov hieromonks administered and monitored the local and regional parishes they had left after taking monastic vows. In addition, hieromonks served as confessors to monastics and imprisoned penitents, and performed other administrative functions. Of the fourteen male monastics listed in 1755, four had recognized managerial duties. For example, Archimandrite Mitrofan supervised the operation of both the convent and the monastery. Hieromonk Tikhon, a “provisor” (*ekonom*), controlled financial arrangements and record

³²⁰ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 118 (1727); GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 75 (1723).

keeping. Hieromonk Lavrentii fulfilled the role as treasurer for monastery expenditures (*u roskhodu kaznachei*). The monk Kornilii supervised monastery income (*u prixodu kaznachei*), even though he was illiterate. Other personnel included an additional six hieromonks, a hierodeacon, a monk who led the choir during church services, a newly tonsured monk who was literate but had no duties listed, and an infirm elderly monk who had died at the convent hospital in January of 1755 at the age of 78. All but two were literate. The seven hieromonks and the hierodeacon were all widowed clergy from the surrounding districts before taking monastic vows.

It was not uncommon for priests to receive monastic tonsure following the death of a wife, since they could not enter into a second marriage after ordination and canon law forbade them to remain in their parish communities without a wife. Yet, there is another explanation besides propriety. As historian James Cracraft noted, Peter's church reforms, "powerfully reinforced the division of Russian society into government and landlords on the one side, and everybody else on the other."³²¹ The secular clergy fulfilled the state's behest to act as agents of an intrusive, watchful government within their parishes. The duties of the hieromonks at Dalmatov functioned similarly, but with additional duties within the convent and monastery. A complex system of watching and reporting of monastics—and of prisoners and penitents--by monastics operated at Dalmatov. While the majority of the nuns at the convent did the manual labor to economically sustain Dalmatov, the abbess of the convent, with a small cohort of sisters, was also detailed to oversee prisoners as part of their service to the state.³²² At Dalmatov, the

³²¹ Cracraft, 251.

³²² A broader account of these activities will be covered in a separate chapter.

convent and monastery were conjoined, but its operation clearly depended on the labor and population of nuns rather than monks.

LANDHOLDING & FEMALE MONASTIC LABOR

Dalmatov monastery complex needed a significant work force for profitable, or at least sustaining, operations. The monastery also controlled the works of an iron-ore smelter after iron and other metals were discovered on monastery grounds in 1682.³²³ The Dalmatov Uspenskii treasury accounts show that there were three monastery grain mills and four granaries, in 1756--one at Dalmatov Uspenskii monastery on the Iset River, the second at the Upper Techinskii settlement on the Techa River where the Vvedenskii convent relocated in 1742, and the third at Prashutishkii settlement on the Shutishka River.³²⁴ The extant 1756 report lacks the pages describing these operations, so it is unknown how many of these mills were in working order, how many monastic peasants lived and worked there, how much grain was received, how much bread flour was produced, or how much income flowed into received into the monastery treasury. However, the records reveal that at least a portion of the workforce was supplied by penal laborers sent to the Dalmatov monastery and convent to plant and harvest its lands and supply its mill operations with grain.

The monastery was improperly charging exiles remanded for hard labor (*katorgi*) an “in-kind tax (*obrok*) that was taken from all at the mills” on the grain the exiles had harvested, in violation of their exemption from taxation.³²⁵ Their land steward Ivan Rukin protested to the

³²³ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 5, *Rozysk zheleznykh rud na reke Zhelezianke, otvedennoi vo vladenie Dalmatovskogo monastyria* (1682), ll. 1-5.

³²⁴ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 533, *Kniga ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskom monastyriakh* (1756) l. 6.

³²⁵ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 533, l. 6.

Orenburg District Katorga Board (*Katorgaia Kollegiia*) in the Isetsk province, and on 16 February 1756 the monastery office at Shadrinsk was put on notice for the violation. It appears the monastery had other non-free laborers as well. After the state reform of monasteries in 1764, Dalmatov monastery relocated 30 workers from the poorest peasant households, claimed their land, and kept them “virtually as slaves, paying them a meager wage.”³²⁶ The *katorga* system is usually associated with forced labor in timber and mining camps in eastern Siberia, yet Dalmatov was one of numerous other instances of forced labor in agricultural settlements in Western Siberia in the eighteenth century. In his study of the exile system, Andrew Gentes found Siberian monasteries possessing 1,082 peasant households in the early eighteenth century, and by 1762 more than 14,000 male souls.³²⁷ Gentes did not distinguish penal agricultural labor from monastic peasants, so it is unclear how many fell into each category.

The Dalmatov convent also had non-free laborers. Local women, as well as entire households of Siberian exiles from European Russia, were assigned to work agricultural holdings, grain mills, and mining production at the monastery complex. Sentences varied, and penal labor operated as merely a transitory work force to support the monastery and convent. Dalmatov abbesses throughout the eighteenth century oversaw the imprisonment and labor of women confined at the convent for secular and spiritual crimes, and occasionally witnessed their transformation into monastic women. In 1734, five defrocked nuns convicted of heresy were committed to hard labor for the rest of their lives at the Dalmatov convent. After six years all reaffirmed their Orthodox faith and they were reassigned to return to their monastic vocations.

³²⁶ Shorokhov, 133.

³²⁷ Gentes, *Exile to Siberia*, 27. However, it appears that based on his sources these figures may have only been for Irkutsk region of the Tobol'sk Eparchy, and the larger Irkutsk Eparchy established after 1721.

However, two years later in 1742 after the Tobol'sk metropolitan became involved in the case, and Abbess Tarsilla reluctantly released them.³²⁸ Evdokiia Pavlova, identified by Tiumen authorities as an unrepentant schismatic woman, was sent to the Vvedenskii convent from the Tiumen Military Governor's Office in 1745. Her sentence was hard labor and a diet of bread and water until she decided to return to the Orthodox faith.³²⁹ There was no mention of whether this woman survived her imprisonment, or if she repented and remained at the convent, or was released to return to Tuimen. In 1742, Iulanina Petrova was sentenced to hard labor and imprisoned at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii convent for life after poisoning and killing her husband, a Tobol'sk garrison soldier Fedot Pechenin.³³⁰ After 17 years of hard labor at the convent she petitioned to be allowed to take monastic vows in 1759. She was tonsured as the nun Iraida at age 67 with the support of Abbess Nimfodora. Neolita Epanchintsovoi, a woman sentenced to hard labor at the convent in 1757, expressed a wish in 1761 to become a nun. Abbess Nimfodora likewise supported Neolita's petition, but the Tobol'sk Consistory ruled that they would not approve her tonsure at this time, but the woman should remain under observation until 1762, when they would revisit the matter.³³¹

The pattern of use regarding hard labor on monastery lands and within the Vvedenskii convent itself indicates that forced labor was an integral part of the labor force to maintain the economic viability of the convent and the monastery. It appears that Dalmatov became known as

³²⁸ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 12. Archival records do not mention where the five defrocked were sent from or returned to returned, but it is likely they were part of numerous "Quaker heresies" that were discovered at the Eniseisk and Tomsk convents and monasteries (and other parts of Russia and Siberia) from the 1730s to 1750s.

³²⁹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, *Perepiska s Tobol'skoi arkhieiskoi kantseliariei o zhenshchinakh kolodnikakh*, 1745, l. 1.

³³⁰ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 609, l.32.

³³¹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 653, l.l. 43-43ob.

a preferred location for forced labor and imprisonment since monastic and laywomen charged with heresy, murder, and other crimes from various locations throughout the Tobol'sk Eparchy were sent there. The above anecdotal cases of hard labor imprisonment represent only a portion of the actual number of women committed to forced labor. Even so the number of bodies needed for physical labor was large, and the nuns, too, had to undertake this work personally. Monastic women were an essential part of agricultural production at the convent, but they also had to task, oversee, and report on those remanded to hard labor.

In the underpopulated agricultural lands of western Siberia in the first half of the eighteenth-century, female monastics labor provided a stable, reliable workforce. Unlike monastic peasants who often fled taxation, starvation or conscription, the nuns had less opportunity to move across and then disappeared into the large ungoverned landscape of Siberia. They represented economic stability as well as fidelity to the church, state, and empire. In stark contrast to the monks, nearly all able-bodied female monastics at the Vvedenskii convent were required to perform physical work, whether skilled or unskilled, with only the abbess holding a purely administrative role. Of the 49 nuns who lived at the convent in 1755, the majority of nuns were assigned to “various monastic obediences” (*v paznom monastyrskom poslushanii*). For some this simply meant carrying out various assigned duties delegated by more senior nuns, although sometimes assigned tasks had a disciplinary rather than a productive purpose, to inculcate submission to authority. Six new initiates, ranging in ages from 23 to 31 had no defined duties, but likely assisted in the fields, at the ovens, caring for the elderly and infirm at the hospital, and in the weaving and production of cloth. Four nuns tended livestock (*skotnitsa*); three nuns were in charge of the ovens as bakers and cooks; and another three were selected to

keep watch over and guard prisoners. Almost all nuns were listed with skill of weaving cloth, and some with the special skill of sewing church vestments, such as Abbess Tarsilla.

Ethnicity, Social Status and Location

The numerous and varied indigenous population that lived in all parts of Siberia makes determining the ethnicity of monastic women speculative at best unless they were explicitly recognized as non-Russian. Among the women at Dalmatov, the nun Anfisa was identified as a newly baptized Tatar who took monastic vows in 1753 at age 29. The ethnic origins of Abbess Tarsilla might prove she was also a baptized Tatar since she and nun Anfisa were the only two nuns listed with no family name in the extant convents registers between 1755 and 1761.³³² A handful of other nuns were from the Vologotsk, and Vetluzh'e districts inhabited by significant number of Urdmurt, Komi, Mari, and Tatar peoples. Fifty-five percent of nuns were from peasant households; seventeen percent were daughters of monastic servants; and nine percent were daughters of priests. A few were daughters of townsmen, factory workers, service men, and soldiers. Nearly forty-five percent were from the lands of the Uspenskii monastery. Seventeen percent from Ekaterinburg district, and twelve percent from the Tobol'sk district. A small number of nuns came from the artisan center of Ustiug in European Russia and the industrial town of Solikamsk, known for its salt works and copper casting. Solikamsk was the starting point of the Babinov Road (*Babinovskii trakt*), the shortest land route from European Russia across the Urals until the Great Siberian Road (*Sibirskii trakt*) began construction in 1730.³³³

³³² Under the 1722 Supplement to Peter I's *Spiritual Regulation* an annual, by name register of monks and nuns were to be sent to the eparchy and Synod. In 1732 the monastery received correspondence reiterating the orders of the Synod possibly because of non-compliance.

³³³ The Great Siberian Road is also known by several other names - the Moscow Road (*Moskovskii trakt*), the Great Highway (*Bolshoi trakt*), the Great Siberian Postal Road (*Glavnyi Sibirskii Pochtovyi trakt*), the Road of Eight Sovereigns (*Os'maia gosudarstvennaia trakt*), and coined the "Tea Road" in recent historical studies. In the weeks following the Treaty of

The Babinov Road passed through Vekhotur'e then on to Tobol'sk, a route no doubt traveled by the women who arrived at the Dalmatov convent from northern cities of Solikamsk and Ustiug.

Age

The median age of the 47 women at the convent in 1756 was 57 years of age, and the median age when taking vows was 24. Nearly fifty percent of women were tonsured in their twenties, even though at a time Peter's Spiritual Regulation prohibited women under the age of 50 to 60 years of age from entering convents.³³⁴ Among women tonsured from 1694 through 1759, the youngest was the future Abbess Tarsilla at age 9. Only one nun, who took vows in 1729 at the age of 63, met the age criteria of Peter's decree. The women's answers may have been inexact, confusing taking up residence at the convent and taking vows. Furthermore, it was not customary in Russia at that time (and even two centuries later) for individuals to keep track of their ages or to celebrate birthdays, and so some of the women might not have known how old they were. In cases when age or infirmity influenced an accurate account, others may have spoken for them.

In any case, clearly Dalmatov was not obeying Peter's restriction on women of reproductive age entering convents. Women in this Siberian convent were allowed to take up monastic life at an early age with the approval of church hierarchs in Tobol'sk who either adapted church regulations their need to fit local conditions. The purpose of Peter's first restriction on entry into monasteries in 1701, to limit the number of monks and nuns living off

Nerchinsk between Russia and China in 1689, Peter I ordered the construction of a southern route over the Urals, but its construction was delayed some forty years, and the overland route to the Chinese border was not completed until the mid-nineteenth century. Commerce and travel continued but was delayed and complicated based on the portage over rivers, the condition of alternative routes, and other military-logistical factors in securing safe passage.

³³⁴ *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great*, trans. and ed. by Alexander V. Muller, (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1972), 79-80.

the work of poor peasants, did not apply in Siberia, where monastics were few. In cases detailed below, the Metropolitan of Tobol'sk viewed poor health as an exception to Peter I's 1721 Spiritual Regulation, at least in Siberia. Since the Tobol'sk Archbishop was not called to be a signatory to the Spiritual Regulation in 1721 because he was too far away, maybe the distance of Siberia could also accommodate his of use discretion concerning those who took monastic vows.³³⁵

Taking Vows

Negotiating the spaces of the Siberian frontier sometimes led families of unmarried young women to seek out monastic life for their daughters. In March 1759, five families petitioned on behalf of their unwed daughters to request that they be allowed take monastic vows. Interestingly, all of the young women already lived at the monastery as novices. The petition explained that these young women could not to marry due to poor health, and that the women wished to spend the rest of their lives as brides of Christ. Anisiia, age 25, and the daughter of a monastic servant; she had been a novice for 7 years. Fedora, age 26, had lived as a novice for 8 years, and Anna, age 20, a novice for 4 years; both were daughters of peasants. Evdokiia, age 30, was the adopted daughter of a widowed priest; she had lived at the convent for 2 years. The last young woman, Anna, age 20, was the daughter of Petr Cheremisin, a former military officer (*kaptelarmus*) at the Tobol'sk garrison. She had come to the convent ten years earlier when her mother was left a widow in 1749. The mothers of the young women, when living, verified that they were not suitable for marriage. In the case of Evdokiia, who had no mother, no one testified to her reproductive health; certainly, her father, the widowed priest, could not have known about it. Abbess Nimfodora and the other sisters verified that time had

³³⁵ Cracraft, 86.

proven the young women to be humble, devout and zealous servants of God. Hieromonk Saava of the Uspenskii monastery reported the wishes of the novices, the consent of the parents, the support of the abbess and the sisters, and requested permission from the Tobol'sk metropolitan for all of the women to be tonsured as nuns at Dalmatov. Metropolitan Pavl' approved their tonsure, and their monastic names were recorded in the 1760 monastic register showing that each had served one year as a nun at the convent. Three of the young women, two from peasant households and the officer's daughter, were listed in the register as literate, and likely they had learned to read and write at the convent.

The local population was well aware of the restrictions on taking monastic vows, as revealed in the responses other young women received when they attempted to enter the convent. In 1761, a 16-year-old girl named Paraskeva Artemeeva, living at the Dalmatov convent, implored the abbess facilitate her tonsure, explaining, "it was my wish from birth" to become a nun. A petitioned was sent to the archimandrite at the Uspenskii monastery, who refused it without even consulting ecclesiastical officials in Tobol'sk. The archimandrite referenced the *Spiritual Regulation* stating that women could only enter after the age of 60, pushing the maximum extent of the decree, or when they exceeded a marriageable age, and that there was no reason she could not marry since she was in good health.³³⁶ Abbess Nimfodora had countersigned petition to the archimandrite at the Uspenskii monastery, but the girl's parents did not submit a petition testifying to her health, disposition and their wishes, ostensibly an important factor considerable by church officials. Perhaps the girl was an orphan, or she had run away from her parents, but having no one to speak for her besides the abbess meant she could not secure a life-long position as a nun. Although the refusal of tonsure did not mean that

³³⁶ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 653, ll. 22-23.

Paraskeva was expelled from the convent, she had no security there; she could be cast out or reclaimed by her parents in the future. Dalmatov did not always follow the letter of the law regarding age restrictions on women taking monastic vows according to the 1722 Supplement to the *Spiritual Regulation*, but in this case they did.

Exigent circumstances of labor demanded a younger population of nuns to replace the aging generations of nuns no longer able to work monastic lands, help maintain the economy of the convent in the bakery or farm yards, or care for the elderly and infirm. The Dalmatov convent served as a local economic center, supported the surveillance tasks of provincial inquisitors, and was a useful location for the imprisonment of local criminals, and elite political prisoners sent from the imperial centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The lenience granted by ecclesiastical and state officials for the tonsure of young women at the convent can be partially explained by the larger imperial concerns regarding the importance of grain production in limited agricultural zones in Siberia, and specifically at Dalmatov, as well as the corrective roles placed upon monastic women and men in the remote spaces of the Siberian frontier. Parents and family played a key role for women when entering monastic life at the Dalmatov convent. Their own desires, and the personal piety of the women, were factors that were considered alongside imperial prerogatives, but personal piety was not a sufficient reason to permit tonsure without parental consent.

The eighteenth-century reports and petitions from Dalmatov to Tobol'sk record the transient nature of the Western Siberian frontier with fleeing peasant populations, and incursions and abductions by Bashkir tribes. Food, clothing, and shelter for monks and nuns took up considerable attention, as well as the material assistance to populations inhabiting monastic lands, such as donations of used clothing and iron pots produced at the Dalmatov smelter. The

convent not only sustained itself, but it was an important fixture in the social, economic, and religious life in the forest-steppe region of Western Siberia. Monastic life within an established group was a viable and sought-after alternative for women to combat economic and social conditions on the uncertain frontier of Siberia.

Care of the Elderly and Infirm

One third of the nuns were confined to the hospital due to old age (*za starosti*), infirmity (*za driakhlosti*), or blindness (*za sleposti*). Sister Aleksandra Dolgykh, a 52-year-old nun who had recently taken monastic vows at Dalmatov in 1753, was in charge of the hospital. On average, it cared for 15 nuns, and other monastic and lay people throughout the region that seeking palliative care, including in 1755 a hieromonk. Two nuns, both at age 95, were transferred in 1748 from the Rozhdestvenskii convent in Ufa to the Dalmatov hospital to spend the rest of their days.

Although central authorities dictated the establishment of a hospital on monastery lands, the institution received no state income for its maintenance. Instead, its income was supposed to come from revenues collected from the sale of church candles to local parishioners and visiting pilgrims.³³⁷ Historically, income from church candle sales functioned as the main source of income for all unsubsidized expenses, and the revenue rarely if ever met the need to fund hospital, schools or other social programs delegated by the state.³³⁸ Candle sales at Dalmatov

³³⁷ Directive on candle sales directed in by the Holy Synod in 1721. See *PSPR*, t.1, No. 17, 39.

³³⁸ Gregory Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, and Counter Reform*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 112; Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia, Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*, (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 166-167. Scott M. Kenworthy, *The Heart of Russia: Trinity-Sergius, Monasticism and Society after 1825*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 184-186. Kenworthy estimates that candle sale steadily made up about 20 percent of church income throughout the nineteenth century, with popular pilgrimage sites such as the Solovetskii and Trinity-Sergius monasteries receiving a larger percentage of this income. Dalmat may have

were likely inadequate for the expenses of feeding, clothing, and caring for the many elderly and sick at the monastery hospital. From 1755 to 1761, an average of three nuns died each year at Dalmatov. Nuns could expect to live longer than other women because they were not exposed to the risks of pregnancy, domestic violence or starvation that afflicted lay women all too often. Nearly all nuns lived to old age, and passed away in their eighties, nineties, or even older. Pelagiia Vaginykh, the daughter of a Tobol'sk townsman, for example, was one of the nuns who was transferred from the Ufa convent at age 95; she died at 103 in 1757. Exceptions to death in old age also occurred; the nun Alaniia Pushkinykh, died in December 1756 at the age of 46. She was the daughter of a Solikamsk townsman, and she lived as a nun at Dalmatov for 20 years. Her vocation there was as the cook and bread baker, one of the most strenuous jobs at the convent. And not all patients confined to the hospital were necessarily elderly. At age 52, Dorofiia Konevalovykh was restricted to the hospital for feebleness, which could imply a lack of either physical or mental strength. Dorofiia had lived 27 years as a nun at working at a Siberian convent with harsh winters and limited comforts, so it may not appear surprising that she was worn out by her life. Older nuns were not usually assigned to the most strenuous work, but the nun Elisaveta was an exception. From age 62 to 68, she continued the strenuous work of tending cattle.

Literacy

The literacy of male monastics was a specified category in the register, but literacy among nuns appears to have been of little interest to the church hierarchy, who did not designate

been a regional place of pilgrimage, but is unknown if a significant number of pilgrims visited the monastery in the eighteenth century to account for significant income from candle sales.

it as a category to list in the registers. Nevertheless, when nuns were literate, the registers noted it, at least some of the time. In 1755, twenty percent of the nuns, including the abbess, were listed as literate in the Russian language (*uchena sloveno rosiiskoi gramote*), and by 1761 the percentage of literate nuns increased to twenty-seven percent.³³⁹ Literate nuns came from all social classes, but most were either in their twenties or thirties, or often daughters of priests or from urban families. Monasteries and convents were supposed to open schools as part of the monastic reforms in the first quarter of the eighteenth century; however, it appears that education of nuns was occurring earlier at Dalmatov. Abbess Tarsilla, who entered the convent at age nine in 1694, was listed as the daughter of a servant at the Uspenskii men's monastery and was likely an orphan. She learned to read, and possibly to write also; given her circumstances, she must have received her education at the convent. Yet other nuns arrived at the convent with a level of literacy. Abbess Nimfodora was the educated daughter of an Isetsk district priest when she entered the convent at age 17. She was elevated to abbess in 1759 at age 45, and took over supervising the nuns when the former abbess was restricted to her hospital bed at age 75. Nimfodora continued as abbess during the church reform of Catherine II beginning in 1764, and remained at the convent until 1788 until its nuns were apportioned out to other eparchies, even after and the convent was shuttered in 1778.

Abbess Tarsilla more humble background did not preclude her from taking the role of abbess, and her literacy and institutional knowledge certainly played a part in her selection. The thirty years between Tarsilla and Nimfodora reflect more than the different social standing of their families, but also the growing frontier and its changing demographics. The *Spiritual*

³³⁹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 520, *Kniga ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskom monastyriakh* (1755), ll. 6ob.-11; GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 653, *Ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskom monastyriakh* (1760-1761), ll. 78ob.-83.

Regulation emphasized that education within monastic communities was a desirable quality, which distinguished useful monastics from the so-called profligates who lived off peasant labor. Literate nuns were necessary for the operation of the convent. Literacy within Siberian monastic communities takes on an added dimension of acculturation to Orthodoxy in relation to communities of newly baptized Christians in frontier towns and villages served by monastic and parish clergy. Nuns interacted frequently with the larger lay community as church choir members and Psalter readers, and in commercial and economic activities. Both literate and non-literate women from the Dalmatov convent were holders and transmitters of Orthodox practice, and religious knowledge in a complex frontier culture of Christianity, animism and Islam.

Sexuality and Confession

The inquisitorial duties of the appointed hieromonks at Dalmatov, included hearing the confessions of lapsed monastics and parish clergy; tracking and fining lay parishioners who did not make confession annually, as required by law; monitoring the practice of Orthodoxy among local parish priests; admonishing penitents and prisoners held for sexual misconduct, schismatic words and deeds; and reviewing the disposition of those charged with political crimes.³⁴⁰ Inquisitors were not bound by the precept of confidentiality, as a matter of imperial decree, and so their reports contain details about individual confession. One inquisitor detailed the sexual transgressions of two nuns after one of them, Pelagiia, gave birth to a child in June 1727. Under questioning, both Pelagiia and the nun Mavra confessed that the liaison began the previous September when Nestor Teliakov, a monastery worker, had come to their cell during morning prayers, seeking money for travel. Pelagiia admitted that she had sinned with Nestor, and that

³⁴⁰ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 118, *Vybor inkvizitora i vedomosti ucheta pastvy* (1727). Other monastery and eparchial records include numerous reports submitted to the Tobol'sk Consistory about the behavior women held at Dalmatov.

Mavra was also aware of this sin. Mavra disclosed that the couple had been together many times, and that she was wrong not to tell the abbess and the sisters about them. Initially, Nestor admitted nothing and said his priest, Iosif, and a *syn boyarskii* (lower-ranked gentryman) named Semeon Evtifev could vouch for him, as he spent many nights with them. The local priest told the inquisitors that this was true, and that Nestor and Evtifev would stay at his house, drink at night, and leave in the morning. Eventually, Nestor admitted that the nun Pelagiia had passed messages to him through another woman, requesting that he meet her in her cell or outside in the gardens of the convent. It also came to light that Mavra was meeting Semeon Evtifev, Nestor's drinking companion, in her cell. Mavra testified that the Semeon had visited her several times asking for money, but she never gave it to him. The record ends with no known resolution of the case, or status of the child. A nun by the name Pelagiia was listed in the convent register in 1755-1761; she lived at the convent in 1727 when she would have been 35. The register also includes a nun by the name of Mavra, who was tonsured in 1728 at the age of 17. Possibly these women were the same nuns brought before inquisitors in 1727, although their identities cannot be confirmed.

THE ABBESSES

Only three nuns served in the position of abbess at Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent from the mid-seventeenth century until the convent closed in 1778. Irina Durganova, the original head nun (*nastoiialet'nitsa*) from 1681-1731, remained in that post until her death at age 96 in 1732. She did not hold the title of "abbess" (*igumenia*), a more prestigious rank for the holder and for the institution. Her successors, the nun Tarsilla, was raised to the stature of abbess in 1735, although convent documents continued to use the traditional title of *nastoiatel'nitsa*. Nimfodora Belozeroва became the last abbess of the convent in 1758, and served in this position until the

convent finally closed in 1778.³⁴¹ Ten years later at the age of 77, Nimfodora was transferred along with the last two elderly nuns at Dalmatov to the Eniseisk Khristo-Rozhdestvenskii Convent.³⁴² The long tenures of each of the abbesses indicates that they performed well in their posts. The abbesses faced the normal tasks of managing the economy of the convent, sending reports to the abbot or archimandrite of the male Dalmatov monastery, and dealing with lapsed nuns, penitents, and prisoners. They also dealt with emergencies: the theft of horses by local bands of brigands or steppe nomads, the pilfering of grain and hay by monastery peasants, and land disputes.³⁴³ They had to contend with the ongoing problem of peasant and military recruits from the villages fleeing to other parts of Siberia. More mundane tasks included accounting for expenses to produce bread, and commemorating the dead.

In the historical accounts of the Dalmatov monastery and convent, Paraskeva, the mother of Archbishop Afanasii of Kholmogory, discussed in Chapter 3, and Tarsilla received particular notice from the Tobol'sk Eparchy. They had come from strikingly different social origins, with one the mother of an archbishop and the widow of a notable Cossack family, and the other the daughter of a monastic servant. Both were characterized as pious, selfless women and exemplars of the Orthodox faith, but while Paraskeva's rise to a managerial position at a convent seems unsurprising Tarsilla's rise to abbess stands out as unexpected. A comparison of these two women, who served in monastic leadership roles, illustrates the permeable barriers of social class on the Siberian frontier.

³⁴¹ Plotnikov, *Opisanie*, 93.

³⁴² GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 16, d. 23, Donoshenie nastoiatelei Tobol'skoi eparkhii ob otpuske zhalovan'ia, o postrizhenii v monakhi. *Vedomosti o monashestvuiushchikh Eniseiskogo Khristorozhdestvenskogo i Dalmatovkogo Vvedenskogo zhenskikh monastyrei, 1788-1811*, ll. 11-11ob.

³⁴³ Index of GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, 1644 - 1920 gg. *Dalmatovskii Uspenskii monastyr'*.

Paraskeva, as discussed previously, was the widow of a prominent Tiumen Cossack, Artem Liubimov-Tvorogov. She took monastic vows under the name of Paraskeva following the death of her husband in 1665. She was tonsured at the St. Sofia Cathedral in Tobol'sk, and she was immediately appointed as the abbess at the Tiumen Alekseevskii Convent. Tobol'sk Archbishop Kornilii appointed her to that post even though she had no previous monastic experience. Undoubtedly, her social status and the expertise she gained in managing her husband's household led them to trust her to do well as abbess. She likely had donated a large sum of money upon her tonsure, too, which could have been a factor. Her son could not have helped her to attain her position at that time; he had not yet even taken monastic vows, much less attained influence in ecclesiastical circles. Officials in Tobol'sk must have found Paraskeva to be a competent administrator, capable of managing the human and financial resources she of the convent, because they retained her in the post of abbess for the next twenty years. She retired in 1685, when she was probably already in her 60s. Two years later, a fire destroyed the Tiumen Alekseevskii Convent in 1687, and the Paraskeva and the sisters were relocated to the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent. While she was at Dalmatov, Archbishop Afanasii sent for his elderly mother, but due to winter weather conditions she was unable to travel north. Eventually, she did visit her son in Kholmogory, but she returned to the Vvedenskii convent, where she died sometime before 1700.³⁴⁴

Tarsilla's life followed a quite different trajectory. Tonsured at age eight, she was sent by Metropolitan Filofei (Leshchinskii) from Tobol'sk to Dalmatov in 1720. In the metropolitan's appeal to have Tarsilla admitted to Dalmatov, he described her as, "the best of the best, among the worst of the worst...at a time when faith is in decline, she has shown herself to be a true

³⁴⁴ Plotnikov, *Opisanie*, 94.

follower."³⁴⁵ We may be skeptical of the metropolitan's flowery language, but it reflected his interest in missionary work. Filofei served as metropolitan from 1705 to 1711, and then as a missionary from 1712 to 1719. He worked extensively among indigenous communities in western and eastern Siberia, claiming to have converted some four thousand non-Christian peoples to Orthodoxy.³⁴⁶ In 1720, begrudgingly returned to the position as metropolitan of Tobol'sk at age 70 after nearly ten years as a missionary.³⁴⁷ There is reason to believe that Tarsilla came from a community of newly baptized Christians. Filofei implored Abbot Isaak to take Tarsilla under his wing. Perhaps Filofei was aware of resistance to Tarsilla at the Tobol'sk Rozhdestvenskii Convent, which would have been a more natural place for his protegee to pursue her career; her young age and possibly her non-Russian birth might have been issues. Filofei explained that Tarsilla herself "begged to be with the nuns [at Dalmatov] or she would rather die."³⁴⁸ She was 26 years old in 1720, she may have been living at the Rozhdestvenskii convent for most of her life, or at least from the time of her tonsure fourteen years earlier. Filofei's very emotional appeal, his promises to her that she would be moved shortly after his return, and his derogatory assessment of the women at the Tobol'sk convent from which she wanted to escape indicate he knew Tarsilla personally. Tarsilla was born around 1694, and her tonsure at the age of eight would have occurred in 1704, at a time when Filofei was initially serving as metropolitan in Tobol'sk. Tarsilla could have been an orphan from one of the Tatars,

³⁴⁵ Plotnikov, *Opisanie*, 97.

³⁴⁶ Safronov, *Kulturnoe naselenie Sibiri*, 572; and *Svetochi zemli Sibirskoi*, 79-85.

³⁴⁷ Metropolitan Ioann had died in 1715, and Procurator Feofan Prokopovich ordered Leshchinskii to return from missionary work in Siberia, and resume the post as metropolitan. He took three years to finally assume his post, seeming to prefer life as a missionary rather than an administrator. From 1716 to 1719 he traveled to Western Siberia regions near –Surgut, Narym, Ketsk; and in Eastern Siberia – Tomsk, Eniseisk, Irkutsk, Turukhansk.

³⁴⁸ Plotnikov, *Opisanie*, 97.

Ostiak, or Vogul villages near Tobol'sk, or a foundling left at the Tobol'sk convent. Although Tarsilla's father is listed as a Dalmatov Uspenskii servant in monastic registers, Feofan's lengthy letter of introduction and glowing reference for Tarsilla clearly show she was unknown to Abbot Isaak before 1720. If Tarsilla's father had been a monastic servant, as the 1755-1761 registers indicate, Isaak like would have known of her family since he served as abbot from the mid-seventeenth century. There may be other possible explanations of Tarsilla's origins, but the lack of a family name for Tarsilla in all monastic registers also suggests she was a newly baptized Christian, as the only known nun listed at the convent without a family name or distinct family origin was a newly baptized Tatar.³⁴⁹ Regardless of whether she was the daughter of a monastic servant or a newly baptized Christian, or both, her social origins and ascent to the station of abbess at one of the most important convents in Siberia shows that women as well as men could rise from humble beginnings.

The broad spectrum of social origins, ethnicities, and circumstances of the lives of these two monastic women speak to the incongruous nature of the Siberian frontier that produced them. At times hierarchies of gender, class, and ethnicity were upheld, and in other instances established boundaries could be disregarded for expediency, individual interest, or sentimental attachment. Despite their differing social ranks, each woman served as a capable administrator for a long time in key institutions in Western Siberia. Both women faced similar responsibilities in their roles as monastic women in Siberia, but there were significant differences as well. Paraskeva's social status and her wealth eased her direct entry into leadership of the convent. Furthermore, hers was an urban convent rather than a rural one. In addition, she governed the

³⁴⁹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 520, *Kniga ucheta monakhov i monashek v muzhskom i zhenskom monastyriakh* (1755), ll. 6ob.-11.

Alekseevskii convent at a time when the state held a generally positive disposition towards the church. Tarsilla experienced different, and more difficult, circumstances in the eighteenth century. She supervised a rural convent, where the nuns had to perform agrarian labor to sustain the convent and the rural communities connected to its lands. Additionally, she had the responsibility of overseeing political prisoners—a role that will be investigated in detail in the following chapter. The convent in Tiumen certainly housed penitents during Paraskeva's tenure, but the spaces she administered were not designated as an imperial prison. Instead, she oversaw public penances, performed at the behest of local civil officials.³⁵⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The specific function of individual convents and the roles of religious women in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth century illustrate the diverse experiences of monastic women and the changing nature of empire. Church institutions strategically leveraged resources and imperial subjects. Monastic women on the Siberian frontier at the end of the sixteenth century to the close of the eighteenth century provided social organization and services to villages and towns that reached beyond the walls of their internal community. Their presence expanded from its modest existence as communities of women gathering under the patronage of Tobol'sk Archbishop Kiprian. The reach of the state in an expanding empire of the eighteenth century is evident in the tasks and duties assigned to monks and nuns at Dalmatov, even as they followed patterns of settlement and interaction previously developed in northern European Russia.

³⁵⁰ For further information on monastic confinement for public penance in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century see A. J. Demoskoff, "Monastic Incarceration in Imperial Russia," in *Orthodox Christianity in Imperial Russia: A Source Book on Lived Religion*, Heather Coleman, ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 43-57. Accessed March 10, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central; and Demoskoff's dissertation *Penance and punishment: monastic incarceration in Imperial Russia*, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.42839>.

With an aging population of nuns and the need to support the financial needs of the convent, and by association the men's monastery, Abbess Nimfodora used any means she could find to bolster to the population of nuns in her ranks. She petitioned for the acceptance of young women and girls to take monastic vows, and she asked that prisoners be allowed to become nuns. In the first, she showed mixed results; in the second, greater success. Much like military conscripts, those enlisted as monastics served life appointments. They created a stable labor force until they became old or infirm and could no longer effectively serve the needs of the institution. The abbesses at the convent, supported by the decisions of the church hierarchy in Dalmatov and Tobol'sk, supported the pre-Petrine notions of the social and economic stability of ecclesiastic institutions in Siberia. By building an "army" or "garrison" of nuns, women in positions of authority negotiated the restriction of gender and social position in order to ensure the survival of monastic institutions on the Siberian frontier during a period of transformation imposed from the center that sought to consolidate, reform, and modernize monastic institutions. Even prior to Catherine II's wholesale secularization of monasteries, the preceding empresses had expanded Peter's policies that curtailed their growth. The activities and administration at Dalmatov illustrate that monasteries on the Siberian frontier worked to maintain their economic viability in an ever-competitive environment for state resources and financial support. Prior to and during the 1764 reforms, metropolitans in Tobol'sk continued to struggle with reducing monastic populations.

The convent at Dalmatov had to leverage its composite workforce of nuns, penal labor force, exiles, and monastic peasants in order to sustain themselves, and to position themselves as an economic resource that could provide grain, an essential commodity for further expansion in Eastern Siberia, the Far East and the Alaska territories. Although successive ruling sovereigns

and imperial officials looked to Western Siberian lands as a supply point for eastern expansion, the agricultural production in the eighteenth century was limited. Dalmatov was located in fertile lands just east of the Ural Mountains, but the sparse population, lack of technological innovation, and limited capital investment did not allow for large agricultural development in Western Siberia or supply eastward until the end of the nineteenth century. The role of monasteries in cultivating and clearing the land for the building of towns in Siberia during the seventeenth century changed over the course of the eighteenth century to focus on political and ecclesiastic life.

Religious non-conformity and political duplicity were often intertwined during periods of social change in Russia. Imperial policies did not intend to privilege the position of female monastics, but inadvertently the requirements placed upon all monasteries and convents throughout Russia played out differently in Siberia. The remoteness, which made the Dalmatov convent an ideal location to support the imperial socio-economic and political designs of Moscow and Tobol'sk, also produced the unexpected consequences of dependence on women's administration and support of a quasi-state institution.

CHAPTER 7 - MONASTIC IMPRISONMENT OF WOMEN IN 18TH-CENTURY SIBERIA

“You will perhaps wonder at the banishing [of] women and children, but here, when the matter of a family is attacked, the whole family is involved in his ruin, all estates belonging to them are seized, they are sunk from nobles to the condition of the meanest of people, and if one misses any that used to be in public, no-body enquires after them: sometimes we hear they are demolished, but when once in disgrace, they are never mentioned. If by good luck they are restored to favour, they are then caressed as usual, but no mention of what has past.”

-Mrs. Jane Vigor, Letter XII, Moscow, 1732

The investigation of monastic imprisonment of women in eighteenth-century Siberia expands the analysis of borderlands to include convents as critical sites for the consolidation of imperial power, and illustrates the gendered dynamic of exile and incarceration. Convents were not only communal spaces for religious women but also prisons where violent intimacies were established to dislocate, dispossess, and coerce ordinary and elite women. Western historical studies of witchcraft in seventeenth-century Russia include accounts of the arrest, interrogation, and imprisonment of male and female witches in local jails or prisons of the *Riazriad*, the Chancellery of Military Affairs, but confinement for clearly a “spiritual” crime did not land witches in a monastery or convent.³⁵¹ Other studies have examined the involuntary commitment of the insane to almshouses (*bogadel’ni*), parish churches, and shrines in central Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but show that monasteries were mostly used as an intermediate step to segregate and cure those afflicted with demons and drunkenness, or were places that provided care for the elderly and the disabled.³⁵²

³⁵¹ Valerie Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), military prisons, 40, 44, 48-49, 98; local or manorial prisons 139, 224, 240, 283.

³⁵² Eve Levin, “Prison or Asylum: The Involuntary Commitment of the Insane to Monasteries in Early Modern Russia,” in *Seeing Muscovy Anew: Politics—Institutions—Culture*, eds. Michael S. Flier, Valerie A. Kivelson, Erika Monahan, Daniel Rowland (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2017), 245-62.

Distinct from previous scholarship, this study will concentrate on the religious authority of women monastics as jailors who wielded secular authority over female monastic prisoners from prominent and ordinary families, who were held within the walls of the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in Western Siberia during the mid-eighteenth century. The authority granted to the abbess and other female monastics went beyond the spiritual realm. As religious women, they implicitly functioned as moral examples, but as jailors they also explicitly acted as agents of empire. Eighteenth-century convents on the Siberian frontier complicate the representation, role, and function of female monastic communities by showing that these women were also leveraged and empowered to control imperial spaces and bodies, rather than only manifesting religious devotion to others, or seeking their own spiritual improvement through a private contemplative life. The abbess and nuns at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent gained authority not necessarily due to their piety, devotion, and leading the ascetic life of a *staritsa* or holy woman, but through their roles as state servitors, in the form of wardens, overseeing the confinement of female political prisoners, female religious schismatics, and morally-tainted women.

Previous untapped archives from the Tobol'sk Ecclesiastical Court, the Dalmatov Uspenskii Monastery, and the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in Western Siberia, and the records of the Preobrazhenskii Prikaz at the Russian Archive of Ancients Acts allows for a closer examination of the interrogation, transport, confinement, and release of female monastic prisoners.³⁵³ Paramount to this study is realizing the limitations of using official church documents to learn about imprisoned women due to the intrinsic biases embedded in texts

³⁵³ RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 449, ch.1-3, *Razriad VII. Preobrazhenskii prikaz, Tainaia kantselariia i tainaia ekspeditsiia – (kolleksiia) Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Rossiiskoi imperii (1712-1762)*; GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 9, and d. 46, *Tobol'skaia Dukhovnaia Konsistoriia, g. Tobol'sk Tobolsk'skoi Gubernii (1721-1922 gg.)*; GAKO (SH), *Dalmatovskii Uspenskii monastyr'*, 1644-1920, f. 224, op.1.

produced by state officials, church hierarchs, and the reports generated by their captors. The documents tell as much about the agents of ecclesiastical imperialism who produced them as they do about the female prisoners that were described.

I will focus on a variety of cases that illustrate the defiance or deference of each woman displayed while held at a Siberian convent, and the reaction of monastic women to their extraordinary prisoners. Three case studies of elite women held at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent during the 1730s through the 1760s - Princess Praskov'ia Iusupova, Baroness Stepanida Solov'eva, and Anna Alekseevna Pavlova--will be the primary focus. The monastic imprisonment of these women was not an anomaly, but rather a set of regular measures to counter political opposition of the elite through corporal punishment. Notable elite women, such as Ekaterina Dolgorukaia, the fiancée to Peter II, also accompanied their noble families in exile to Siberia after their unsuccessful bid for the throne following the young emperor's death in 1730.³⁵⁴ After nearly eight years of exile in the northern Siberian town of Berezov, she and her two sisters also found themselves banished to live out their days in various Siberian convents in the Tobol'sk Eparchy.³⁵⁵

As a display of legitimacy and mercy, if not a warning to other elite court families, the new sovereign, Empress Anna Ioannovna began using monastic imprisonment in 1730 to consolidate her authority. Empress Elizabeth, who succeeded her in a palace coup in 1741, maintained the use monastic prisons, although on occasion she pardoned previously convicted criminals. In the years 1732 to 1740 the Ministry of Secret Affairs investigated on average 50

³⁵⁴ A. I. Sulotskii, "Kniazhna Ekaterina Alekseevna Dolgorukaia v ssylke v Berezove i monashestve v Tomske," *Pribavleniia k Irkutskie Eparkhal'nye Vedomosti*, 1872, No. 49, 645-654 i 50, 659-671; also published in *Russkii Vestnik*, 1880, No. 7, 5-19; R. Ignat'ev, "Iz zhizni gosudaryni-nevesty kniazhny E. A. Dolgorukovoi," *Russkii arkhiv*, Vol. 1, col. 38-46, 1866.

³⁵⁵ Sulotskii, No. 50, 661.

cases of treason per month-- 1909 cases in the 1730s alone. Each case resulted in the arrest of three to four persons, or a total of some 6,600 persons during the decade of Anna Ioannovna's rule.³⁵⁶ In 1744, a memoirist during Anna's "bloody rule," K. G. Manshtein, provided an exaggerated number of over 20,000 exiles. But in reality, Anna exiled more than 668 people to hard labor, compared to Elizabeth's 711 from 1742 to 1761.³⁵⁷ Additional data compiled by Evgenii Anisimov shows that 31 persons were exiled to monastic prisons from 1725 to 1761, with the majority sent between 1725-1740, that is, 14 between 1725-1730 and 12 between 1731-1740. None were listed as exiles from the elite.³⁵⁸ Although the imprisonment of high-ranking persons or even members of the royal family occurred in other times in Russian history, much is not known about the lives of women of any social rank held in Siberian convents.

The Siberian setting is central because of its particular characteristics as a borderland of empire where resources and populations were controlled by ecclesiastical authorities on behalf of the imperial designs. Siberia is often characterized as a dumping ground for vast numbers of citizens who were too disruptive and dangerous to keep in the heartland but not quite disruptive and dangerous enough to execute. But few studies have examined specific narratives of political exiles, or account for the wide-ranging social structure among exilic populations.

Thus, this study of the monastic imprisonment of elite women in the eighteenth-century challenges the idea of Siberian exile for the purpose of agricultural settlement that exists so broadly in the historical literature.³⁵⁹ Siberian exile was not merely a place for peasants

³⁵⁶ Evgenii Anisimov, *Dyba i Knut: Politicheskii sysk i russkoe obshchestvo v XVIII veke*, (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 1999), 680-681.

³⁵⁷ Anisimov, *Dyba i Knut*, 680. The author references K. G. Manshtein, *Zapiski o Rossii, 1727-1744*, St. Petersburg, 1875.

³⁵⁸ Anisimov, *Dyba i Knut*, 717-718.

³⁵⁹ Alison K. Smith, "Movement and the Transformation of Siberia in the Eighteenth Century," *Sibirica: Interdisciplinary Journal of Siberian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer 2017): 44-67;

behaving badly, or a space for social and geographic control of the state over the mobility of the lower classes. In the eighteenth century, Siberia was also a space for the political exile of the elite, specifically to exclude their influence on political matters in the capital. Thus, Asian Siberia was on the one hand imagined in official legal rhetoric as a transplanted Russia, imitating cultural forms of agriculture centered on the village and Orthodox belief.³⁶⁰ And on the other hand, Siberia was a space of difference, deprivation and distance that was suitable to hold treasonous members of elite families. It was not a land of agriculture and sustenance, or even a “mercantile colony,” that reached its apogee in the eighteenth century, as Mark Bassin has argued.³⁶¹ Siberia in the eighteenth century was a complex political, social, and economic space that must be examined beyond imperial decrees from the center, or an economic system that extracted resources from the periphery.

An examination of gender performance, and the transitional moral and legal expectations of elite women in the eighteenth-century Russian society can help scholars understand deeper meanings of female monastic imprisonment. Based on Judith Vowles’ work, I suggest that women in Russian society were neither viewed as morally superior to men, nor economically dependent upon men. Some current scholarship inaccurately characterizes women in eighteenth-century Russia as victims or pawns of patriarchy; limited to the role, influence and legal standing

Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590–1822* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Daniel Beer, *The House of the Dead: Siberian Exile under the Tsars*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017).

³⁶⁰ Smith, 46. In contrast to Smith’s analysis of a new agricultural vision of Siberia in the eighteenth century, the reality was limited arable land, shorter growing seasons, and defensive security demands faced by settlers when they arrived in Siberia, which was very different than the idealized rhetoric of official decrees. When Siberian military governors and church officials petitioned for grain and bread from the center, they often received peasants to carry out subsistence agriculture instead.

³⁶¹ Mark Bassin, “Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian East in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *American Historical Review*, 96, 3 (1991): 767, 770.

which men would deign to give them.³⁶² Vowles argues that some foreign observers in eighteenth-century Russia looked to elite or noble women to conform to prescribed models of European femininity, which extolled moral rectitude and sexual modesty, and explained women's dependence on men due to their 'natural' physical weakness, and mental fragility.³⁶³ However, these observers found Russian elite women to be deficient according to their own ideals of feminine performance. French traveler Charles Francois-Philibert Masson, and British women, such as the Wilmont sisters and Jane (Rondeau) Vigor, described Russian aristocratic women and affluent young women in the countryside as domineering, masculine females.³⁶⁴ Although the above foreign observers displayed competing feelings of revulsion and admiration, they generally found Russian women's sexuality, rough language, indifference to men, and involvement in public life unnatural and upsetting.³⁶⁵ Simply put, to European visitors gender performance in Russia, even at the end of the eighteenth century, was poorly adapted to European models, further showing Russia's exotic, 'oriental' difference compared to 'occidental' Europe.

This chapter will focus on the secular authority of women monastics, and how elite and ordinary female prisoners and their jailors responded to ascribed identities, positions, responsibilities, and circumstances within the walls of the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent. In the

³⁶² In Gentes, *Exile to Siberia*, the accounts of Siberian exile prior to 1800 reflect nineteenth-century models of repression rather than the complex realities where women and men adapted to the conditions of exile in Siberia.

³⁶³ Vowles, "Marriage à la russe," 56.

³⁶⁴ Charles Francois-Philibert Masson, *The Secret Memoirs of the Court of St. Petersburg* (London, 1805), 266-7.

³⁶⁵ Masson, *The Secret Memoirs*, 266-7; Catherine Wilmot and Martha Wilmot, *The Russian Journals* (London: Macmillan, 1934), 217; Jane Vigor. *Letters from a lady, who resided some years in Russia, to her friend in England. With historical notes*. 2nd ed. London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1777.

first half of the eighteenth century, Dalmatov was increasingly used as a site to confine female political prisoners sent from the capital, and local schismatic women charged with heresy as a crime against both church and state. In this role, Dalmatov was not alone; Solovki near Arkhangelsk and the Spaso-Efimiev Monastery in Suzdal were distinct monastic prisons for elites and others charged with high political crimes.³⁶⁶ The monastic administrators at these institutions had to add, “prison warden” to their list of daily duties.

Women incarcerated for political duplicity, religious dissent, insanity, and behavioral transgressions at the convent were known as *kolodnitsi*, “female imprisoned persons.” In legal sources dating back to the Law Code of 1649, the term *kolodnik* referred to any imprisoned person, and was intertwined with references to statutes on the detention of serfs, slaves, thieves, bandits, robbers, and other criminals.³⁶⁷ The 1669 Criminal Articles governing the punishment of clergy accused or guilty of murder, robbery, theft, and other crimes stated that punishment included imprisonment, but there was no specific reference to members of the spiritual ranks held as *kolodniki*.³⁶⁸ Incarceration in a monastery was also a provision of canon law. It was used as a typical punishment for erring clergy, yet it was also mandated lay people in some circumstance, as evidenced in some manuscripts of Iaroslav’s Church Statute from the twelfth century.³⁶⁹ Lay people condemned to monastic incarceration included unmarried women who

³⁶⁶ Biographies of various elite women of who were held as prisoners - D. Mordovtsev, *Russkie zhenshiny novogo vremeni: Biograficheskie ocherki iz russkoi istori. Zhenshchiny pervoi poloviny XVIII v.*, (St. Petersburg: A. Cherksova i Ko., 1874); and for information on Solovetskii and Spaso-Efimev monasteries - A. S. Prugavin, *Monastyrskie tiur'my v bor'be s sektanstvom k voprosu o veroterpimosti*, Moscow, 1905.

³⁶⁷ *PSZ*, t. I, Ul. X, 147, 271; Ul. XX, 59, 112; Ul. XXI, 9, 10, 16, 44, 47, 55; No. 441, 8, 26, 41, 58, 112.

³⁶⁸ *PSZ*, t. I, No. 442, 800-2.

³⁶⁹ *Drevnerusskie kniazheskie ustavy XI-XV vv.*, ed. Ia. N. Shchapov (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 94. Iaroslav build up on Vladimir’s Statue to include an index of persons within the church jurisdiction, and outlined rules of family law, and sanctions against moral violation under church

were raped, women who gave birth out of wedlock or committed infanticide, persons judged to be mentally impaired, those deemed morally tainted, heretics (expanded to include *raskol'niki* in the seventeenth century), and political prisoners.

By the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the term *kolodniki* appears as a specific legal category of incarceration, referring to a particular type of prisoner. In legal statutes of the Russian state, the Senate and the Holy Synod in 1721 recognized both men and women under the juridical status of monastic prisoners, and referred to them explicitly as *kolodniki* and *kolodnitsi* whose imprisonment was to be funded jointly by the two governing bodies.³⁷⁰ The initial decree of 1721 made no mention of *kolodniki* to be held in monasteries or convents, but rather under guard in the military barracks of designated local fortresses (*ostrogi*).

The Holy Synod likely assumed the sole responsibility for monastic prisoners when the Senate was dissolved on June 1, 1731, and a small cabinet of ministers appointed by the new Empress, which included the Minister of Secret Affairs, delegated responsibilities. An official mention of monastic confinement appeared in a 1735 decree, noting that men and women convicted of crimes, whose minds were allegedly damaged by infirmity or age (*v ume povrezhdenie*) would hold under guard in monasteries and convents throughout Russia.³⁷¹ Not appearing in the legal record is the additional role monasteries and convents fulfilled as prisons

jurisdiction. For the text of Iaroslav's Statute directing women to be housed in convents for sexual crimes committed by them or against them see Daniel Kaiser's translation at <http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/kaiser/iaro.html>.

³⁷⁰ *PSPR*, t. 1 (1721), No. 201, 253; *PSZ*, t. 6, No. 3824, 433-4.

³⁷¹ *PSZ*, t. 9, No. 6803, 575. An official decree by the Synod and Senate on 23 June 1742 mentions an imperial order dated 15 March 1727 issued by Catherine I, stating that elderly and insane (*dlia ispravleniia uma*) male and female prisoners of the Preobrazhenskii Chancellery convicted of serious crimes shall be sent to monasteries, however no order appears in the record of Russian laws in 1727. The Preobrazhenskii Chancellery (1697-1729) was the precursor to the Secret Chancellery (1731-1762). See *PSPR*, t.1 (1741-743), No. 141, 160, and *PSZ*, t. 11: No. 8587, 630.

for political prisoners. The identification of these individuals as a special group was connected with the general tendency of strengthening state intervention in the judicial jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, while the intent of the Holy Synod was for abbots and abbesses to exercise all administrative authority over their prisoners. On the one hand the state was relieved of carceral responsibilities for aberrant members of society, but on the other, the church officials expanded their power to exact obedience and assert control over the secular sphere of criminals charged with political crimes.

CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT

State authorities determined the site and conditions of imprisonment at monasteries, and also provided funds to pay the costs. However, church authorities were charged with supervising the prisoners' detention. The principal feature of punishment was designed to be admonitory, serving as a deterrent to others, but the overwhelmingly majority of *kolodnik* cases involved circumstances associated with "incoherence" (*sumasbrodstvo*), "madness" (*sumashestvie*), or "not being in one's mind" (*ne v ume*). These women were transported by military escorts, who brought with them letters from the Holy Synod with specific instructions to monastic officials on how regulate their imprisonment. Historically, the church and state worked together irregularly on criminal matters in which canon law and the judicial apparatus of the Church had complementary goals with the tsarist legal authorities. During the Muscovite period, the judicial authority of the church was strengthened as monastic lands were immune from secular courts, and church councils successfully defended the right to judge ordained clerics.³⁷² Although the Muscovite state created the Monastic Chancellery in the seventeenth century to oversee all

³⁷² Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment*, 37.

secular matters of those institutions, religious crimes such as superstition, heresy, and aspects of family law remained under church control. The 1669 Criminal Articles allowed for the church to have oversight in secular courts, so that secular judges could not interrogate clergy until they had been defrocked, allowing church consistories to function somewhat autonomously from the state.³⁷³ A notable exception was schismatic clerics, who were severely dealt with by the court of the patriarch after they were defrocked for heresy.

The arrest, interrogation, and imprisonment of women have remained little more than a footnote in Russian historiography, and more often appeared centuries later as cautionary tales of aberrant female behavior, or examples of arbitrary rule and despotic oppression during an unenlightened period in Russian history.³⁷⁴ At the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent a wide spectrum of sentencing and treatment existed among varying classes of women, with elite prisoners faring the worst. Although the eighteenth century is considered an enlightened time when Russian elite women began entering public society,³⁷⁵ this chapter will show that their elevated position was precarious at best; the sins of the fathers, brothers, and sons were visited upon mothers and daughters. The tradition of holding families responsible for the misconduct of

³⁷³ Weickhardt, George G. "Muscovite Law on Monasteries." *Russian History* 39, no. 1/2 (2012): 13-41.

³⁷⁴ "Po donosheniiu Kantseliarii Tainykh Rossiiskikh Delo po strizhenii v monashestvo soderzhashchesia v odnoi nekotoroj devitsy i otsylke eia v dal'nii devichii monastyr'." *Opisanie Dokumentov i Del, Khраниashchikhsia v Arkhive Sviatsheshago Pravitel'stvuiushago Sinoda, tom XV* (1735), (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1907), 193-4.; A. A. Polovtsov, *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*: v 25 (Moscow, 1896-1918): t. 31, 345; D. L. Mordovtsev, *Russkie zhenshchiny novogo vremeni. Biograficheskie ocherki iz russkoi istorii. Zhenshchiny pervoi poloviny XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tip. O. I. Bakst, 1874), 299-319; G. S. Plotnikov, "Ssylochnye v Dalmatovskom monastyri, I. Kniazhina Paraskeva Iusupova," *Permskie eparkhal'nye vedomosti*, No. 15, (otdel neofitsial'nyi), 1869, 199-207.

³⁷⁵ The inclusion of elite women in the intellectual and literary salons in Russia began in the eighteenth century as an outgrowth of Peter I's desire to reform or "modernize" Russian elite society to mirror the salon culture of Western Europe.

their members is an important aspect of the phenomena of female monastic imprisonment. If we examine the judicial concept of *poruka*, the traditional legal responsibility for the communal policing of behavior in peasant and lower-class groups, we find no comparative model among the elite in Russian society.³⁷⁶ Elite women were thus brought low, while non-elite women were elevated and endowed as agents of power, given authority over intimate spaces and confined bodies inside a convent prison.

IMPRISONMENT OF THE ELITE

Head Nun Tarsilla and Princess Praskov'ia Iusupova, confined from 1730 to 1762

The ascent of Anna Ioannovna to the Russian throne in 1730 had dire consequences for many of the noble families at court, and among these were the Iusupovs. The entire Menshikov and Dolgoruki families were sent in exile to the northern Siberian town of Berezov for attempting to manipulate the marriage of their daughters to Peter II prior to his sudden death in 1730. Praskov'ia Iusupova suffered alone. She was the nineteen-year-old daughter of Grigorii Iusupov, a high ranking general and one-time confidant of Peter the Great, was sent to Siberia. Her brothers, in contrast, continued their military and political careers.

Praskov'ia was a lady-in-waiting to Peter the Great's daughter Elizabeth, the future Empress. She was arrested by officers of the Ministry of Secret Affairs, charged with attempting to bewitch the new Empress Anna Ioannovna. Two weeks following the death of her father in 1730, Iusupova was confined to Tikhvin Vvedenskii Convent in European Russia, not far from St. Petersburg, where she lived in relative comfort. During this time, several rumors circulated in

³⁷⁶ Horace Dewey, "Suretyship and Collective responsibility in pre-Petrine Russia," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge*, bd. 18, h. 3 (September 1970), 337-54. Dewey's study of individual and communal suretyship argues that all levels of pre-Petrine society were affected by *poruka*, which resulted in unexpected political consequences.

Moscow and St. Petersburg, alleging that she and her father had conspired to place Elizabeth in power. Others speculated that she was exiled in place of her dead father, who was part of a conspiracy to limit the power of Empress Anna following her ascent to the Russian throne. While at Tikhvin Praskov'ia had a genteel confinement, allowed to receive visitors and maintain contacts despite specific instructions to the contrary.³⁷⁷ Once local people and visitors to the Tikhvin area found out she was at the convent, Iusupova became something of a local celebrity. Soldiers on leave from the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, their extended family members, and other military men who served with her father and brother came repeatedly to pay respects, bring gifts, and receive loans of money from Iusupova. While visiting, they enjoyed conversation, dined on fine food, and drank vodka with her and Abbess Dorofeia.³⁷⁸ This situation continued for five years. On April 30, 1735, the Ministry of Secret Affairs Ministry of Secret Affairs Ministry of Secret Affairs discovered that, beginning in 1732, Iusupova was enlisting support from Tikhvin landowners, military officers, monastery clergy, and court officials in St. Petersburg in order to negotiate her release while in monastic custody.³⁷⁹ Under the cover of darkness, she and her two female attendants were brought to the Ministry of Secret Affairs in St. Petersburg for interrogation. After months of investigation and torture, which involved over a dozen separate interrogations, judgment was pronounced against Iusupova:

... For villainous acts and obscene words, by the power of public law, although a princess, [she] is sentenced to death; but her imperial highness [Empress Anna],

³⁷⁷ RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d.449, ch.1, l. 91, *o kniazhniiu Praskov'e Iusupovoi soslannoi v ssylky za namerenie privorozhit' k sebe imperatritsu Annu, govorivshei o pridvornnykh sodestiiakh i, nakonets, byvshei v snosheniiakh v Sibiri s gosudarst. pristupnikom St. Sovet. Temiriazevym, 1735-1763.*

³⁷⁸ RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d.449, ch.1, l. 53-105.

³⁷⁹ RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d.449, ch.1, l. 53-105.

showing mercy to Iusupova for the service of her father, deigns to free her from the sentence of death, but does not have the right to free her from the power of public law; such are the limits of her mercy.³⁸⁰

Instead of being put to death, Iusupova was flogged, forcibly tonsured as a nun under the monastic name of Prokla, and ordered to spend the rest of her life confined at a women's monastery in Siberia.³⁸¹ The Ministry of Secret Affairs specified that, "she is to be sent under guard to a far off, harsh women's monastery, one that will be designated by the Bishop of Novgorod, where Iusupova will spend the rest of her days and never leave."³⁸² The far-off monastery turned out to be in Western Siberia, with the exact location of Iusupova's imprisonment left undetermined until she arrived in Tobol'sk in 1735. For church officials carrying out state orders, Siberia as an "Asian" hinterland suited their overall purpose. Eighteenth-century monastic prisons on the Asian continent performed a valuable function by making monastic spaces relevant in an increasingly secularized state. Siberia was imagined as a space largely governed by somewhat reliable Russian servitors, but its severe climate and geographic distance isolated the region from the capital, and served as a physical and mental barrier to manage ambitious courtiers and their political intrigues.

The welfare of elite women had little to do with the sentiments of concerned relatives or ruling monarchs, but much to do with their family's concern about their health and material maintenance. The imprisonment of Iusupova and other elite women released their families from monetary obligations and inheritance claims. Imprisonment in Siberia was for all practical purposes a sentence of death financially, if not physically. Most often relatives were under a

³⁸⁰ Polovtsov, *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, 345.

³⁸¹ RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 449, ch.1, l. 3.

³⁸² RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 449, ch.1, l. 3.

moral obligation to provide some material support for imprisoned persons. Iusupova was allocated two and a half kopecks a day for food, but it is unclear if the money was from her family, a benefactor, or *ruga*, a paltry stipend for basic sustenance allocated by the state for monastics. Based on the circumstances of their imprisonment, it appears that in this case (and the two to follow) these elite women had cautious relatives who wanted to make sure they were cut off from their legal inheritance in land or money.

After spending several months in a cell at the Tobol'sk Rozhdestvenskii monastery, Iusupova was escorted to the western boundary of the Tobol'sk Eparchy. Tarsilla, the abbess of the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent, first encountered Iusupova two years after her arrival in Siberia, so it is likely she was held at the Verkhotur'e Pokrovskii Convent beginning in 1735.³⁸³ Once Iusupova arrived at the convent, she was placed in the custody of Abbess Tarsilla, who in 1737 received the following orders regarding her:

By the order of her Imperial Highness, through the investigative office of the Ministry of Secret Affairs to the convent where the nun Prokla was sent under guard for serious unlawful acts, the head nun Tarsilla is commanded to hold her to the end of her life. She is not allowed to leave; she is to be watched closely so that her life is disciplined; she is allowed to [go to] services only in the monastery church; she is not to speak to anyone and no one is to speak to her; no one shall be admitted to see her; no one is to write to this nun or about her. If the nun Prokla behaves contrary to expectations, and her life does not demonstrate decency or if

³⁸³ The original 138-page document from the Tobol'sk Ecclesiastical Court reads, "A case concerning the former Princess Praskov'e Iusupova (now called Prokla), sent to the Verkhotur'e monastery for high crimes," an indication that she was housed there for two years until 1737 when orders were given to the head nun Tarsilla about her terms of imprisonment.

she acts against the orders of her majesty by mocking her punishment, note the instances for which she was punished, and send a report to her imperial majesty through the investigative office of the Ministry of Secret Affairs.³⁸⁴

Under the terms of Iusupova's incarceration, she was supposed to remain isolated and submissive to the nuns in charge of the monastery. Even at a distance, Empress Anna (or officials acting in her name) expected to be kept informed about any violations of their instructions. The head nun Tarsilla became the agent of the government at Dalmatov, directed to supervise the state prisoner and to report to the authorities about her behavior.

Shortly after she arrived at Dalmatov, Iusupova exhibited defiant behavior that required the nuns to exercise their coercive duties as state and imperial servitors. The nun Prokla with her servant were given a separate cell, which she was permitted to leave only to attend church at the convent, and she was not to enter into conversations with any outsiders. Surprisingly, she could have an inkpot, paper and a quill in her cell for writing letters, yet there is no remaining record of her correspondence. Surveillance of her actions and behavior was delegated to the nuns Epikhariia, Evtropiia, Evstoliia, Trifena, Evfimiia, and Mitrodora, who were to maintain constant guard over her and report back to the head nun Tarsilla.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9 *Delo o byvshei kniazhne Praskov'e Iusupovoi, soslannoi v Verkhotyrskii monstyr' za vazhnoe prestuplenie i narechennoi v monastyri Prokloi*, 1737, ll. 11-14.

³⁸⁵ Plotnikov, "Ssylochnye v Dalmatovskom monastyri," 201-2, and GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 39 lists the women who kept guard over her in the context of the investigation regarding her possession of poison (*sulema*).

Not long after Iusupova arrived at the convent, Abbess Tarsilla complained about the “outrages” committed by Iusupova to Archimandrite Silvestr at the Uspenskii Dalmatov Monastery in December 1737:

First, in church she does not glorify the Mother of God; second, she threw away and does not wear her monastic clothes; third, she does not call herself by her monastic name Prokla, but rather calls herself Praskov’ia Grigorievna; fourth, she becomes furious, often commits disgusting acts towards the monastics--for no reason she hits nuns, she doesn’t listen; when food is sent to her in her cell she says it is unacceptable, and sometimes throws it on the floor, curses at me and then demands for herself the best food and that it always be fresh and recently prepared. With tears I beg of you, your holiness, convey my testimony to all, pray for a decision because I your servant cannot report from this time onward for me this torture is unacceptable.³⁸⁶

Iusupova refused to cooperate with the terms of her incarceration and live as a subservient nun. Instead, she continued to act as a woman of the elite. She felt free to beat servants who failed to please her, and she treated the nuns as servants. As in her former life, she demanded that she be catered to, literally in terms of food. Tarsilla, for her part, found herself unable to fulfill the administrative roles that were hers. She was not able to act as the head of the monastery because Iusupova did not obey her, and she was unable to fulfill her instructions from the Empress in regard to Iusupova—that is, to act as the agent of the sovereign and the empire. Tarsilla found this situation to be distressing to the point that she begged her superior to release her from it.

³⁸⁶ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 11-12

Tarsilla's superior, Archimandrite Silvester, did not have the authority either to release Tarsilla or to change the terms of Iusupova's incarceration. He could only send her laments to his superior, Metropolitan Antonii of Tobol'sk. The Metropolitan instructed Tarsilla to hold Iusupova "under strict watch in her cell with her legs in iron chains" until she ceased her "unexpected insolence."³⁸⁷ Tarsilla was also given permission by the Ministry of Secret Affairs to have Iusupova whipped for her impudence, and remind her that she could be put to death.³⁸⁸ It is doubtful that still stricter treatment made Iusupova more compliant. At the same time, he gave Tarsilla no relief from her onerous supervisory role; indeed, he legally could not, because the Empress had directed Tarsilla to oversee her confinement. The only recourse for Antonii was to inform his superiors at the Synod and the Ministry of Secret Affairs of the problems and await their instructions.

Three months later, on 6 March 1738, Antonii received a reply from the Holy Synod and the Ministry of Secret Affairs in St. Petersburg.³⁸⁹ The Synod and the Ministry were unwilling to respond to the report of difficulties by giving either Iusupova or Tarsilla what they wanted. Instead, the officials in faraway St. Petersburg issued still more stringent orders concerning Iusupova's confinement and provided no relief for Tarsilla.³⁹⁰ For all the stringency of the Synod's response concerning Iusupova's incarceration, the Synod did seem to be willing to address the question of her diet. The Synod issued funds to feed her better, and asked for an accounting of the 130 rubles and 94 kopeks delivered by Sergeant Aleksei Gureev in 1735 to the Tobol'sk Eparchy.³⁹¹ The Synod could not be certain that the funds it issued were used for

³⁸⁷ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 11-12.

³⁸⁸ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 46.

³⁸⁹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 15.

³⁹⁰ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 6.

³⁹¹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 17.

Iusupova, and they had to depend upon persons in Siberia to keep track of the money. That person turned out to be Tarsilla, along with the Dalmatov treasurer Nikola and the metropolitan of Tobol'sk. In addition to supervising Iusupova and trying to ensure her compliance with orders, Tarsilla had to account for the expenditure of state funds. She had to present accurate accounts to the Dalmatov treasurer, the monk Nikola, in order to receive the money.³⁹² In other words, while Tarsilla had the obligation of accounting for the money, she was not actually given the money to control on her own. The head nun gathered receipts to show that the monies delivered in 1735 to the Tobol'sk Eparchy were allotted for her demanding prisoner. Pounds of fresh local fish, honey, a variety of nuts and berries, sugar, coffee, tea, and lemons were among the provisions obtained for Iusupova.³⁹³ Monastic servitors travelled to Western Siberian markets in Tobol'sk, Tiumen, Irbit, and Ialutorovsk to secure not only food but also beaver pelts, expensive Chinese silk lace, damask silk, fine linen, muslin and satin cloths, as well as candles, and white chalk wash for their persnickety prisoner. Also purchased for Iusupova were gem stones - a brown stone for 6 rubles in 1735, and another dark blue stone for 15 rubles in 1741.³⁹⁴ Although the provisions provided Iusupova were certainly luxurious for monastery life, a closer examination reveals that the majority of monies expended went to non-food items, calling in to question Tarsilla's proper management of funds for Iusupova's food. Iusupova and Tarsilla battled over her wearing of monastic clothing, so bolts of fine linen and black satin, beaver pelts, and gems stones could have been for Iusupova or just as likely purchased for her monastic keepers. To the kopeck all monies allotted for Iusupova were expended by the summer of 1743,

³⁹² GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 20; GAKO (SH), f. 224, op.1, d. 266, ll. 1-3, *Doneshenie ot nastoiatel'ia monastyria mitropolitu v Tobol'sk o sodержanii manakhini Iusupovoi, 1742-1743*.

³⁹³ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 21-25.

³⁹⁴ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 21 and l. 24

shortly after answering the inquiries of Metropolitan Antonii and the Synod. Tarsilla sought to look blameless in the eyes of the Metropolitan and the Holy Synod. The receipts showed that she was doing all she could within her power to accommodate an elite woman, while enforcing the orders of Iusupova's imprisonment, responsibilities that were many times at odds.

In the midst of accounting for monies expended on Iusupova and managing other prisoners held at the convent, Tarsilla sent Abbot Silvestr another report on 26 August 1743 describing how Iusupova continued to act out: "...[she] is behaving completely offensively; she will not go to church; she does not wear her monastic dress; and she will not use her monastic name."³⁹⁵ Even though Tarsilla kept Iusupova under constant observation, she and the nuns guarding her were powerless to rein her in. Tarsilla again had to turn to the Dalmatov abbot to ask him to get the new metropolitan of Tobol'sk to intervene, and the metropolitan again had to seek guidance from the Synod and the Ministry of Secret Affairs.

Once Elizabeth was proclaimed empress, she issued a manifesto on 15 December 1741, which allowed many of the 20,000 exiles throughout the empire to return to their families or remain where they were (such as Siberia), even without permission of the local officials.³⁹⁶ Two orders were issued from the court of Empress Elizabeth in September 1742 and later in November 1743 regarding the release of persons exiled across the Russian Empire.³⁹⁷ After thirteen years of living under guard, possibly Iusupova's life would now change. Iusupova had reason to hope she would be freed from exile, since the new empress had once been her close companion during their shared childhood in Peter the Great's court. In February 1744, Abbott Silvestr mentioned the recent order of the Empress Eizabeth in connection with Iusupova, stating

³⁹⁵ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op.1, d. 266, l. 4.

³⁹⁶ *PSZ*, T. XI, No. 8481, 546-9 (December 1741).

³⁹⁷ *PSZ*, T. XI, No. 8817, 945-6 (November 1743); No. 8263, 277-80 (October 1742)

that she should be released into the custody of the Isetsk Provincial Office to be transferred to the Siberian Provincial Office in Tobol'sk.³⁹⁸ The Isetskii provincial office had also asked that she be freed on 10 February 1744, and suggested to the Siberian district office that she be sent to Moscow to appear before the Senate.³⁹⁹ Another imperial manifesto, issued in March of 1744, listed four men who could be released from the Dalmatov Uspenskii Monastery, and five women.⁴⁰⁰ Baroness Stepanida Solov'eva, confined for a crime similar to that of Iusupova, had already been granted her freedom, and she was sent from Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent to Moscow in January 1742. Despite the attempts by local officials and the abbot of the Dalmatov Uspenskii Monastery, the 1743 decree left the original instructions of Empress Anna Ioannovna and the Ministry of Secret Affairs of 1735 unchanged. Iusupova was to spend the rest of her life confined in isolation at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent.

Iusupova's aberrant behavior continued to be a problem for officials in the Tobol'sk Eparchy, but the situation suddenly became worse. A litany of correspondence was unleashed between the Dalmatov Monastery and the Siberian Provincial Office, and the Holy Synod and the Ministry of Secret Affairs in St. Petersburg, when Iusupova was found carrying poison while travelling to Tobol'sk on 11 October 1743. Some weeks earlier the Siberian Provincial Office dispatched Tobol'sk garrison soldiers to Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent with instructions for Tarsilla to release Iusupova for travel to Tobol'sk, along with her Kalmyk servant Maria

³⁹⁸ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 9, ll. 49-50.

³⁹⁹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 57-58.

⁴⁰⁰ These releases are separate from the cases of ordinary women mentioned later in the article, but may have been a consequence of the 1742 directives issued by the Tobol'sk Eparchy to the Dalmatov monastery and convent to release all monastic prisoner at the convent who were confined in the years 1734 and 1735.

Ivanovna, and several other monastic prisoners.⁴⁰¹ While on the road to Tobol'sk, having stopped in Tiumen', the guard Ivan Paramonov discovered that Iusupova had a small box with a suspicious substance in it. Iusupova claimed that it was medicine for a toothache and that she had it with Tarsilla's knowledge and consent. The guard recognized that the substance was actually a small amount of a powerful poison, mercuric sulfate (*sulema*),⁴⁰² and reported it. Upon questioning, Iusupova admitted that the salve could be harmful; another nun, Susana, had used it and fallen ill, although she did not die.⁴⁰³ Worried that he might be implicated in harming Iusupova, the guard Paramonov reported the event to his superiors when he arrived in Tobol'sk. The Siberian Provincial Office sent notice of the discovery to Metropolitan Antonii, who then sent a report to the Holy Synod, as well as a demand for information from Abbot Silvestr. During the investigation from 4 to 10 January 1745, the nuns denied knowing anything about the poison. Upon further questioning, the sisters hypothesized that the poison must have come from someone Iusupova travelled with, a released former nun or maybe the defrocked archpriest Aleksei Mikhailov.⁴⁰⁴ In a face-to-face confrontation between the monk-priest Kornilii and Iusupova during her questioning at the monastery, Iusupova claimed that she had showed him her neck, swollen from the poison. Kornilii claimed that if her neck was swollen, he never heard of her illness, and that numerous persons at the convent could testify to this. Iusupova responded

⁴⁰¹ The document does not name the other prisoners to be released, but the date does coincide with the release of five defrocked nun is in 1743 (see case below).

⁴⁰² Gerhard Frederick Müller notes in *Opisanie Sibirskikh Narodov*, ch. 2, gl. 25 “*Ob oxote*”, l. 22, that “Russians use *sulema* (*Mercurius sublimatus*) in the forest for [poisoning] foxes.” In his notes *sulema* is described as – “*Sulema-khlorid rtuti (Mercurius sublimatus), bestsvetnoe kristallichesкое veshchestvo, iad.*” (English translation: Sulema-chloride mercury (Mercury sublimates), a colorless crystalline substance; poison.).

⁴⁰³ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 9, ll. 5-6.

⁴⁰⁴ Plotnikov, “*Ssylochnye v Dalmatovskom monastyri*,” 205; GBTO GA (Tobol'sk), F. I156, op.1, d. 9, ll. 5-6.

indignantly, “no one here actually tells the truth.”⁴⁰⁵ In January 1745, Abbot Silvestr questioned the nuns who had previously held constant watch over Iusupova in her cell. Eftropiia, Evstoliia, Evfimiia, and Mitrodora said they had not seen Iusupova with poison in her cell; they did not give her poison and no one came to her and rubbed poison (*zel'e*) on her tooth.⁴⁰⁶ Not fully believing the nuns, Abbot Silvestr realized that he could not put Iusupova among them any longer. He believed that Iusupova’s presence definitely had a corrupting influence on them, so that they could now be telling lies to protect themselves or even Iusupova. Although authorities in Tobol’sk gathered information about Iusupova’s possession of poison over the next several months, the power to determine what should happen to Iusupova lay with the Synod, and not with Tarsilla or Abbot Silvestr or even the metropolitan of Tobol’sk. The Synod decided that Iusupova had attempted suicide and ordered her flogged. It was the responsibility of the metropolitan of Tobol’sk to carry out the sentence, but he declined to do so, commuting her punishment in recognition of the Easter holidays.⁴⁰⁷

Why would Iusupova have had poison? Perhaps it was indeed a salve to treat toothache. But possibly Tarsilla provided it to Iusupova in hopes that she would poison herself. Based on Iusupova's behavior, and the fact monies to provide for her maintenance were completely expended by 1743, it is possible that head-nun Tarsilla and the other sisters may have attempted to poison their inconvenient prisoner. On the other hand, Iusupova also could have attempted to

⁴⁰⁵ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 9, ll. 38-38 ob. - testimony as taken down during actual interrogation; l. 41 - transcribed testimony in letter to Metropolitan Antonii. Note: during the interrogation it was only Iusupova that signed her name to the testimony, where all other monastics had priests and deacons sign for them.

⁴⁰⁶ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, l. 39.

⁴⁰⁷ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 7-8.

take her own life with the help of the nuns that gave her the poison, or the other monastic prisoners who traveled with her to Tobol'sk.

After spending several months housed in Tobol'sk awaiting the conclusion of the investigation, Iusupova returned with her servant to live outside the walls of the Dalmatov men's monastery for four months, until 3 September 1744. They were housed in a cell under the supervision of the same rank-in-file soldiers of the Tobol'sk Regiment who had guarded her during her return travel from Tobol'sk. Earlier in September 1742, a fire had destroyed the cells of the Vvedenskii Convent and the nuns were living at the convent church (Ioanno-Pretechevskii), until the convent was rebuilt on the banks of the Techa River. Wanting little to do with Iusupova, Tarsilla and the nuns determined that the convent church was not an appropriate place for her confinement. Once appropriate cells were built, Iusupova was returned to the convent. The lack of cells may have been a pretext, as it is likely that Tarsilla objected to taking Iusupova back after the episode and investigation surrounding the poison, which also put her and the other sisters under scrutiny.

It is not clear how often Iusupova rebelled against her imprisonment and how often measures were taken against her to enforce her compliance. During the subsequent years, the head nun Tarsilla and a host of sisters at the convent continued to serve as her jailors to correct her behavior with primarily physical means, with little use of spiritual supplication. She was still living at the convent in 1746, when her name appeared in association with others exiled to Dalmatov.⁴⁰⁸ There is no record of Iusuopva when the Tobol'sk Eparchy and its convents and

⁴⁰⁸ RGADA document on the exile and imprisonment of State Counselor Ivan Temiriazhev at Dalmatov men's monastery mention Iusupova, Temiriazhev was associated with Andrei Osterman, Count Minikh, and Mikhail Golovkin, exiled after Empress Elizabeth successful coup d'état in 6 December 1741.

monasteries underwent state reform in 1764. It is possible that she was buried in an unmarked grave the gardens of the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent, as local lore suggests.⁴⁰⁹ Collectively, Iusupova spent over thirty years in monastic confinement, from her arrest in St. Petersburg in 1730 to her death within the walls of a Siberian convent sometime after 1760.

The lives of Tarsilla and Iusupova were intimately entwined in the spaces of the convent prison at Dalmatov for over 20 years. By 1769 only eighteen nuns were listed in the Tobol'sk Eparchy. The rest were sent to other eparchies in Irkytsk, Viatka, and Kostroma, with the youngest, healthiest, and those held against their will relocated to other convents. By 1779, only one female prisoner remained at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent.⁴¹⁰

Baroness Stepanida Solov'eva, confinement from 1739-1742

The second prominent woman confined at the Dalmatov was the Baroness Stepanida Solov'eva, who began her imprisonment at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent in 1739, several years after Iusupova's arrival in 1735, but prior to Pavlova's appearance at the convent in 1742. Much like Princess Praskov'ia Iusupova, Baroness Stepanida Solov'eva found herself unexpectedly before the head of the Ministry of Secret Affairs, General Andrei Ushakov, in 1735.

While at a dinner hosted by Andrei Ushakov, Solov'eva was relaying a bit of family business to another female dinner guest, S. A. Saltykova. The Baroness had received a letter from her daughter Mavra telling of certain remarks made by her son-in-law, Privy Counselor V. V. Stepanov, that the head chamberlain to Empress Anna, the Duke of Courland, Ernst Johann

⁴⁰⁹ Plotnikov, "Ssylochnye v Dalmatovskom monastyri," 207.

⁴¹⁰ Plotnikov, "Ssylochnye v Dalmatovskom monastyri," 207.

von Biron, was also her lover.⁴¹¹ Ushakov, having overheard the seditious conversation or having been told of it, soon had Baronesses Solov'eva, Mavra, and Mavra's husband thrown into a dungeon at the Ministry of Secret Affairs awaiting further interrogation. Ushakov's investigation cleared Mavra after several days and nights of detention. Though seriously distressed, Mavra never gave information on her husband, and no evidence of the letter could be found. Yet she did state that her husband had often "complained that his mother-in-law had lost all sense of shame." In short order Empress Anna decided to believe that the Stepanovs were innocent of sedition, and she freed them on March 18, 1739. But Solov'eva was found guilty; then flogged, tonsured as a nun under the name Sofiia, and sent to the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent to spend the rest of her life.⁴¹²

Solov'eva, unlike Iusupova, was not disruptive, and Tarsilla found no cause to complain about her behavior to the abbot and the metropolitan. Perhaps that was why Empress Elizabeth chose to release her in 1742, while denying a similar petition from Iusupova.⁴¹³ Solov'eva's friends and family must have also become involved, pressing for her release at the highest levels of government in St. Petersburg. Imperial orders issued in 1741, 1742, and 1743 allowed for the pardoning and release of various categories of prisoners, but specifically stated that those convicted of "word and deed" against the sovereign—that is, treason--as Solov'eva had been, would not be freed. The release of Solov'eva reflects not only the process of return from exile for elite women, but also the arbitrary fate of political prisoners.

⁴¹¹ I. V. Kurukin, *Anna Ioannovna*, (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 2014), 374. The author cites information gathered from the investigative records of the *Preobrazhenskii Prikaz* and the Ministry of Secret Affairs -- RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 449, l. 3, 23, 109, and 121.

⁴¹² GAKO (SH), f. 224, op.1, d. 232, *Perepiska s Tobol'skim mitropolitom o zhenshchinax kolodnikakh Vvedenskogo monastyria*, 1741, ll. 1-2.

⁴¹³ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, ll. 5-11.

Each of the governing bodies that had orchestrated Solov'eva's exile and imprisonment were now involved in her return. Orders were generated in the name of the Empress through government offices of Senate, Ministry of Secret Affairs, and the Siberian District Office, as well as the ecclesiastic offices of Holy Synod, Tobol'sk Eparchy, and all the way down to Abbot, head-nun, and the sisters at Dalmatov, to reverse the process of expulsion and return Solov'eva to Moscow. On 23 January 1742, Solov'eva was order to be released without delay from the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent and begin her overland journey to Moscow. By imperial order, carts and drivers were secured for her transport, and where traveling by cart was not possible, boats with pilots were to be found along the route. Solov'eva's care and protection during travel were also paramount, and all financial and material support for her escort through Siberia back to Moscow was to be calculated at two kopecks for each *verst* travelled and assessed to the government.⁴¹⁴

Canon law forbade a nun to return to secular life, so her jailors likely expected that Solov'eva would retain the status as a nun at a local convent once she returned to Moscow. However, discussion ensued as to whether she actually had been tonsured as a nun in 1739.⁴¹⁵ While in monastic custody for three years, Solov'eva was known as "the nun Sofiia," but by January 1742, Tarsilla, the Abbot Silvestr, as well as ranking Church and state officials now referred to her as the baroness and as the wife and widow of Afanansei Solov'ev. These choices of titlature implied their acknowledgment that she had returned to secular society as a middle-aged widow.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 8.

⁴¹⁵ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 6.

⁴¹⁶ The imperial order and correspondence to free Solov'eva in December 1741- January 1742, see GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, ll. 5-11.

Because Solov'eva cooperated at Dalmatov, the record concerning her incarceration is meager. She outwardly complied with orders and assimilated to monastic life. She was not perceived as a threat within the walls of the convent, and ultimately, she was released after three years of imprisonment.

Abbesses Tarsilla and Nimfidora and Anna Alekseeva Pavlova, confinement from 1743 to 1772

Anna Pavlova was the wife and widow of junior lieutenant Iakov Pavlov, and the daughter of Andrei Baskakov, the one-time Procurator of the Holy Synod, the extremely influential lay official and head of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1725 to 1730.⁴¹⁷ Pavlova was convicted of the vaguely-worded crime of “known and serious spiritual offenses.”⁴¹⁸ In fact, the offense for which she was condemned and exiled to Siberia was actually her father's crime of incest with her.⁴¹⁹ Andrei Baskakov had fallen out of favor when Empress Anna came to the throne. He was removed from the position of procurator, but remained in government service. When Elizabeth came to the throne, she demoted him, and it is possible that the charges of incest were trumped up to justify his political downfall. Whether the charge was legitimate or it was constructed for political expediency, it tainted the character of both Baskakov and his daughter.

⁴¹⁷ A. A. Polovtsov, *Russkie biograficheskii slovar', tom. 2 – Aleksinskii – Bestuzhev-Riumin* (St. Petersburg: tip. Glavnogo Upravleniia Udelov, 1900), 558; F. V. Blagovidov, *Ober-prokurory Sviateshego Sinoda v XVIII i pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Kazan: Tipo-litografiia Imperatorskago Universiteta, 1904), 8-125; A. V. Popov, *Sud i nakazaniia za prestupleniia protiv very i npravstvennosti po russkomu pravu*, (Kazan: tipo-litografiia Imperatorskago Universiteta, 1904), 419. The most scurrilous mention of Baskakov and his daughter is found in a narrative about legal judgments, and the punishment of the faithful for immoral crimes against Orthodox belief and Russian law

⁴¹⁸ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, see l. 7 - “*po izvestnomu vazhnomu dukhovnomu delu*”.

⁴¹⁹ *Polnoe sobranie postanovlenii i rasporiazhenii po vedomostvu pravoslavnago ispovedaniia Rossiiskoi Imperii, Tsarstovanie Gosudaryni Impreatritsy Elizavety Petrovny*, tom I, (1741-1743) (St. Petersburg: Synodal'naia Tip., 1899), No. 176, pp. 202-203 and No. 294, 296-7.

Those who moved against Baskakov, possibly the Empress herself, perceived him as a political threat as a former high-ranking cabinet member and influential provincial governor. Baskakov's enemies leveraged their influence with local officials and townspeople, bringing about his downfall and the ruin of all who surrounded him. In an attempt to silence testimony from sixteen household members who could have refuted the charges of incest, the servants, including women and children, were identified as a group of Old Believer schismatics.⁴²⁰

On June 17, 1742, Empress Elizabeth ordered that Baskakov be replaced as governor of Smolensk, and that he and his daughter Anna Pavlova, and their servants be brought to Moscow under guard. Under interrogation in Moscow, representatives of the Ministry of Secret Affairs and the Holy Synod determined that his servants were in fact schismatics, and that Baskakov and his daughter were protecting them. At the end of 1742, all arrested persons were brought before the Senate, which issued the judgment that all should be aggressively forced to accept the "true faith." The fate of Aleksei Baskakov is unknown. In February 1743, the Holy Synod ordered Anna Pavlova to a women's monastery in Siberia, where she was to be tonsured as a nun and held there for "eternal repentance" (*v vechnoe pokaianie*).

Anna Pavlova was dispatched to Tobol'sk under the guard of three soldiers. During the journey the young widow was allowed a single female servant to accompany her, but not from her household in Smolensk.⁴²¹ Her servant Elena Alekseeva, acquired for the journey in Moscow, was not to remain in Siberia, but ordered safely returned to her home at the government's expense.⁴²² Set to leave on 13 February 1743, the soldiers in charge of the six-cart

⁴²⁰ Blagovidov, 8-125.

⁴²¹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, *O prislyke soderzhashcheisia pri kontore Sviateishogo Pravitel'stvuiushchego Sinoda pod karaulom vdove Anne Pavlovoi Alekeevoi docheri (1743-1772)*, l. 3

⁴²² GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 24.

convoy escorting Pavlova were to keep her under constant surveillance, and return to Moscow without delay after transporting their prisoner. The soldiers were to be paid three kopecks per person for every ten *versts* traveled.⁴²³ Including wagon drivers, the convoy to Tobol'sk was made up of at least eleven travelers. If at some point during the journey Anna Pavlova fell ill and was close to death, the soldier in charge of the convoy, Gurii Poltev, was to seek out a priest so that she could have last rites and receive the Eucharist; they were to note the place where she had died and the name of the priest, reporting all of this to the Metropolitan when they arrived in Tobol'sk.⁴²⁴

Along the route to Tobol'sk the convoy escorting Pavlova stopped at post-horse stations (*iamy*), and travelled through rural districts (*uezdy*). As they passed through local civil authorities were obligated by government orders to provide fresh horses, lodging, food and safe passage for their onward journey east. The first stop was Nizhegorodsk on 22 February 1743; four days later they reached Viatka on 26 February; pressing on to the Siberian cities of Solikamsk on 4 March; and then Verkotur'e on 7 March. The convoy finally arrived in Tobol'sk on 14 March 1743, after nearly a month's journey. Pavlova was brought before Metropolitan Antonii.

Gurii Poltev carried a letter for the metropolitan in Tobol'sk with instructions for Pavlova's incarceration:

(1) She is to be held in a permanent cell with bars under close watch so that she cannot make a plan to escape...

⁴²³ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, ll. 1-2. The first five pages detail their route to Siberia.

⁴²⁴ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, ll. 3-4.

- (2) Regarding her conditions at the Rozhdestvenskii Convent, you are to give an oral report to the Tobol'sk Eparchial Consistory if she falls sick, and if she is [still] living while confined.
- (3) She can be allowed to attend church services in the Rozhdestvenskii Convent under observation, if she behaves well.
- (4) She is to be constantly under guard and no one is allowed to see her, and she is to go nowhere else under penalty of serious fines.⁴²⁵

The Holy Synod ordered Pavlova to be tonsured as a nun, but apparently that did not occur; she remained known by her secular name. Perhaps her “serious spiritual offense” – the charges of incest and presumed schismatic sympathies that led to her imprisonment, or her rebellious conduct at the convent resulting in reports of insanity to Tobol'sk, precluded the imposition of monastic vows.

Once the convoy escorting Anna Pavlovna reported to the metropolitan, without delay she was sent under guard to the Rozhdestvenskii monastery, only a few miles from his residence. Almost immediately upon her arrival, Metropolitan Antonii sent a request to the Holy Synod for her transfer to the remote Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent on the western edge of the Tobol'sk Eparchy, some 300 miles away. At the same time, he directed Abbot Silvestr of the Dalmatov Uspenskii Monastery build a specific fortified cell for the *kolodnitsa*, pending her arrival. As in the case of Praskov'ia Iusupova in 1737 at the monastery, no rooms were immediately available for her and she had to live with the head nun Tarsilla until accommodation for her could be made. Tarsilla presumably was no happier to share her private quarters with Pavlova than she

⁴²⁵ GATO (TOB), f. 1156, op.1, d. 46, ll. 7-8.

had been with Iusupova. A month after her arrival at the convent, Abbot Silvestr informed Metropolitan Antonii that the prisoner continued to be monitored by the three soldiers guarding her, and as specified the convent received the allotted monies for her maintenance. The metropolitan instructed head nun Tarsilla that once Pavlova was in her custody, she was to account for cost associated with food and clothing the prisoner, and monitor all aspects of her daily life. Throughout her imprisonment, monk-priests from the Dalmatov Uspenskii Monastery were assigned to oversee and report on her compliance with religious instruction and penance for her serious spiritual crimes.

From February to July 1743, Anna Pavlova was held under guard at Rozhdestvenskii convent in Tobol'sk, then on 7 July 1743 three soldiers from the Tobol'sk garrison escorted her under guard to the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent.⁴²⁶ Pavlova did not act out immediately, but by February 1744, the head nun Tarsilla reported to Tobol'sk her "sinful and dangerous behavior."⁴²⁷ Tarsilla speculated that Anna Pavlova was "not in her mind," because of her excessive conduct: "...the widow cursed and abused the other nuns, even went after several sisters with a knife and threatened to cut them."⁴²⁸ Perhaps because Tarsilla was faced with having two problematic, violent prisoners, Metropolitan Antonii decided to relocate Iusupova to Tobol'sk at this time. Meanwhile, Tarsilla and the sisters dealt with their new arrival, Anna Pavlova.

Unlike Iusupova, Pavlova was supervised not only by Tarsilla and other nuns on a daily basis, but the monk-priest Nektarii of the Dalmatov Uspenskii Monastery also visited her periodically in the capacity of her spiritual father. Pavlova was not uniformly rebellious to her

⁴²⁶ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 25.

⁴²⁷ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 33

⁴²⁸ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 32.

overseers. On 27 February 1745, Nektarii had head nun Tarsilla, along with the nuns Maksimila, Pavla, Trifena, Evtropia, Afanasieva, Marina, and Sikhklitika, testify in writing about Pavlova's behavior during church services. They reported that “the widow Anna Alekseeva cries in her room, but when it is time for church services she goes with other believers to pray, makes her prayers, then after church she humbly and meekly returns to her cell without incident.”⁴²⁹ When Nektarii visited her from January through December of 1747, he found her deferential.⁴³⁰ In the absence of female nuns, she listened to his exhortation and admonitions, and he sent favorable reports, Father Feodovseev, the priest at the Nikolevskii church at the convent, who was also charged with her supervision. It is unclear why Nektarii was retained in this role at all. He had to travel from the Dalmatov men’s monastery some 45 kilometers away, and under canon law it was irregular for a monastic priest to be the spiritual father for a female penitent, and even more unusual to leave a monk or a priest alone with a woman.

Pavlova behaved differently with Tarsilla and the other nuns, who found her to be threatening. Tarsilla reported that she was hostile to women who came near her at church services, and her intermittent crying and wailing upset others during the liturgy. In 1748, Tarsilla complained to the abbot that Pavlova seemed to comply with her penance only in the presence of priests and monks, but continued to defy correction in common spaces outside of her cell.⁴³¹

Pavlova’s behavior throughout her imprisonment was unpredictable, and her rebellious acts were mainly reserved for the public spaces when she attended church services and could be seen by lay worshipers as well as her jailors. Pavlova never fully acclimated to monastic life.

⁴²⁹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 47.

⁴³⁰ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 317, *Dnvenik ieromonakha Nektariia o povedenii kolodnitsy Anna Alekseevny*, 1747, ll. 1-4.

⁴³¹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 432, *Perepiska s Tobol’skoi konsistoriei o kolodnikakh*, 1752, ll. 5-6.

after nearly ten years at the convent she still became enraged, followed by long periods of silently refusing to do anything. In the midst of listening to the Divine Liturgy during the church holiday of St. Peter and Paul, “she entered the church calmly, then began shrieking and raged at a young boy performing a reading of Christ being taken into custody, and worst of all knocked the service book from his hands and ran back to the refectory.”⁴³² Following this outburst Tarsilla complained that she refused to go to church, stopped praying, and did no work at all in the convent for close to a year.⁴³³ Although no mention of Pavlova’s punishment for throwing a holy book on the floor exists, she may have only been not only stubborn and defiant, but injured or recovering from a beating.

Pavlova outlived Abbess Tarsilla, who was replaced by Nimfodora sometime in 1758. Her antagonistic relationship with the new head nun and the sisters continued, in contrast to the obedience she mustered for male clergy. Based on her age, health, and having spent over twenty years at the convent, monk-priests and other male clergy who served as her spiritual father sent requests to the Metropolitan in Tobol’sk asking for her to be tonsured as a nun, beginning in 1763.⁴³⁴ Unlike those that visited Pavlova monthly, Abbess Nimfodora and the other nuns that served as her jailors experienced Pavlova differently. Appealing to the Tobol’sk Metropolitan in 1765, Abbess Nimfodora and the sisters argued that Pavlova should not be tonsured because of her continuing disobedience. In September of 1762, they had to still correct her behavior, because she was “fearless” (*bezstrashna*) and then “unseemly” (*bezchinna*) when reprimanded.

⁴³⁵ The nuns and novices told Nimfodora that Pavlova sought to set herself apart from them

⁴³² GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 51-52. (Incident on 29 June 1752).

⁴³³ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 51.

⁴³⁴ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, ll. 79-80.

⁴³⁵ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 77.

because of her wealth. Nimfodora told Metropolitan Pavl that her prisoner was more concerned with her money (*bole nadelas' na svoi chervontsy i rublevyia manety*), with throwing things around in her cell, than in her continuing her penance.⁴³⁶

The next decade of Pavlova's captivity progressed similarly, with months of obedience punctuated with episodes of upheaval. In December 1771 Pavlova fell ill, and after twenty-eight years at Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent, she died on 6 March 1772.⁴³⁷ On her deathbed she was tonsured as a nun despite Nimfodora's objections and the strict state regulations of monastic orders.⁴³⁸

Iusupova's and Pavlova's opposition to imprisonment placed these two women prominently in the archival record as defiant, dangerous persons who after several years of confinement were described by head nun Tarsilla, and her successor Nimfodora as "unruly" (*neposlushnyi*), "fearless" (*bezstrashna*) and "unseemly" (*bezchinna*) based on the nuns' inability to cope with or change the oppositional behavior of their prisoners.⁴³⁹ Iusupova and Pavlova were not formally characterized as insane, because this would make them less responsible for their conduct prior to and during their incarceration.

Additional Cases of the Elite: The Dolgorukii Family in Siberia

In 1730, the entire Dolgorukii family was caught up in the court intrigues of many male members of their extended family, including Peter II's favorite Ivan Dolgorukii. While Peter was

⁴³⁶ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 77.

⁴³⁷ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, ll. 84-87.

⁴³⁸ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 83.

⁴³⁹ GATO (TOB), f. I156, op.1, d. 46, l. 77; GAKO (SH), f. 224, op.1, d. 266, *Doneshenie ot nastoiatel'ia monastyria mitropolitu v Tobol'sk o soderzhanii manakhini Iusupovoi*, 1742-1743, l. 4.

on his deathbed, they attempted to conclude a secret marriage between him and Ekaterina Dolgorukaia. They claimed that she was pregnant with the heir to the Russian throne, and demanded that she be named Empress Regent.⁴⁴⁰ This unsuccessful bid for the throne by the Dolgorukiis was more than enough justification for exile. To make matters worse, the family patriarch spoke out against Empress Anna's ascension to the throne following the death of Peter II. Thus, the Dolgorukii family in general and Ekaterina in particular represented a clear threat to Anna's legitimacy as empress. The entire Dolgorukii family was exiled to Siberia. Not long after the family arrived in Berezov, Ekaterina miscarried the child she was carrying six months into her pregnancy.

Four years after the death of their parents, Prince Aleksei Dolgorukii and his wife, in 1734, the family in Berezov was broken up. Rumors of the family's continued disloyalty and sedition had reached the capital, and in May 1738 Empress Anna dispatched Captain Ushakov of the Preobrazhenskii Guards⁴⁴¹ to Berezov to investigate, following a report from a Berezov scribe at the military governor's office. Once Ushakov concluded his investigation, the eldest son Ivan Dolgorukii, a close friend and favorite of Peter II, was taken into custody with his wife Natalia (née Countess Sheremeteva)⁴⁴² and their young children (Mikhail age 7, and their newborn son Dmitrii) along with five priests, a deacon and twenty other supporters of the Dolgorukii family.

⁴⁴⁰ A. I. Sulotskii, "Kniazhna Ekaterina Alekseevna Dolgorukaia v ssylke v Berezove i monashestve v Tomske," *Pribavleniia k Irkutskie Eparkhal'nye Vedomosti*, 1872, No. 49, 645-654.

⁴⁴¹ The source may be referring to Ushakov, the head of the Ministry of Secret Affairs, but in 1738 Ushakov's rank was that of a General.

⁴⁴² Countess Sheremeteva was the daughter of Field Marshall Boris Sheremetev and Anna Saltikova of the powerful 17th-century Naryshkin clan; and is regarded as well-educated accomplished female author in the late 18th century, known for the unpretentious memoirs of her life from her orphaned youth to exile, then life as a nun. She compiled her story as Nektariia, the aged ascetic nun of the great schema at the Kiev convent prior to her death in 1771.

All were brought before the spiritual and secular courts in Tobol'sk where they were interrogated, found guilty of sedition, and punished. The exact fate of the twenty Berezov townsfolk convicted as conspirators is unknown, but they never returned to their small north Siberian community. The churchmen appeared before the Tobol'sk Metropolitan Antonii (Stakhovskii) where a variety of corporal punishments were inflicted. They were whipped or beaten with the knout; some had their nostrils slit, while others were defrocked. Several were sent to Ilimsk, north of Irkutsk, but most were exiled to hard labor in the salt mines of Okhotsk in far northeastern Siberia. Appropriating the authority of local governor's court in Tobol'sk, Captain Ushakov acted as judge over the twenty townspeople and the members of the Dogorukii family. All were found guilty of treason in Tobol'sk, yet Prince Ivan Dolgorukii was transported back to European Russia to be judged for a second time before a court in Novgorod where he was also found guilty, broken on the wheel and beheaded in 1739. After the execution of her husband, Natalia took monastic orders as the nun Nekatriia, but it seems she was able to delay her entry into monastic life until her eldest son married in 1754. In 1758 her mentally ill younger son Dmitrii accompanied her to the Kiev convent where he died at age 32, two years before her death in 1771. At the end of her life, Natalia Dolgorukaia candidly recorded her memoirs, including her experience in exile, this work has been recognized as an exemplar of Russian female writers in the eighteenth century.⁴⁴³

It is uncertain whether Natalia, as the widow of Ivan Dolgorukii, freely chose to take monastic orders. It is evident that once Ivan's sisters were forcibly taken from Berezov, they

⁴⁴³ D. S. Mirsky, "Eighteenth-Century Prose," in *A History of Russian Literature from the its Beginnings to 1900*, (ed.) Francis J. White Field, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999. 60. Mirsky's survey singles out Dolgorukia's memoir for its "beautiful and undefiled Russian," but does not list the title.

had little choice about entering monastic life. The Dolgorukii women behaved similarly to Iusupova in that they violated imperial order of isolation and seclusion while housed at their initial locations of exile. Subsequently, the Dolgorukii sisters were tonsured as nuns and were sent to different Siberian convents: 23-year-old Elena was sent to the Tomsk Uspenskii Convent in 1740; Anna, who may have been the youngest in the family but no date of birth is recorded, was sent to the Verkhotur'sk Pokrovskii Convent in 1740; and 26-year-old Ekaterina to the Tomsk Khristorozhdestvenskii Convent in 1738. The three remaining sons were brutally beaten with the knout, had their tongues cut out and sent further east into Siberia. 24-year-old Aleksei was exiled to the sailors on the Kamchatka Expedition in 1740, 27-year-old Nikolai and 20-year-old Alexander were first sent to Tobol'sk in 1738, then to Vologda in 1739, and in 1740 to hard labor in Okhotsk, and then on to Kamchatka.⁴⁴⁴ But despite their recalcitrance, most members of the Dolgorukii family were rehabilitated after a few years. By the decree of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna on December 3, 1741, the Dolgorukiis were released, except for Princess Anna Dolgorukaia, who remained imprisoned at the Vekhotur'e convent until 1741. She was then moved to the Tiumen Uspenskii Convent, where she died in 1758. Although most accounts about Ekaterina Dolgorukaia state that she was held at a convent in Tomsk until the family was rehabilitated at the end of 1741, one claims that she was moved in 1739 to the Goritskii Voskresenskii Convent on the White Sea until Empress Elizabeth pardoned her in 1744. Elizabeth allowed her to marry a short time later in 1745.⁴⁴⁵ Her sister Elena also married soon after returning from exile, but inexplicably Anna was kept in exile in Siberia. She may have

⁴⁴⁴ A. I. Sulotskii, "Kniazhna Ekaterina Alekseevna Dolgorukaia v ssylke v Berezove i monashestve v Tomske," *Pribavleniia k Irkutskie Eparkhal'nye Vedomosti*, 1872, No. 49, 645-654 and No. 50, 659-671; also published in *Russkii Vestnik*, 1880, No. 7, 5-19.

⁴⁴⁵ Ignat'ev, R. "Iz zhizni gosudaryni-nevesty kniazhny E. A. Dolgorukovoi," *Russkii arkhiv*, Vol. 1, col. 38-46, 1866, 42.

wished to continue her monastic life, or she could have been mentally unstable or too physically ill to survive the trip to rejoin her family.

IMPRISONMENT OF LOCAL LAYWOMEN AND FEMALE MONASTICS

Alongside elite women sent from European Russia, local laywomen and female monastics were also confined at Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent. They, too engaged in instances of disobedience and outright rebellion against monastic rules, showing their maladjustment to the conditions of their confinement. The systems of punishment and confinement as religious penance in European Russia were emulated in Siberia, as the concerns for moral and political order were paramount in unsettled Asian territories. These female prisoners and penitents served limited terms of imprisonment, and then were released. In contrast to female prisoners from well-connected families, whose health and welfare demanded regular reports back to church and state officials in the capital, the local women charged with heresy or unspecified spiritual or moral offenses were of little interest outside the Tobol'sk Eparchy. These cases, like those of elite women, illustrates the imperatives for their eventual release and return to their respective communities. Russian imperial officials and the Tobol'sk Eparchy understood that the correction of criminal and errant non-elite men and women in Siberia was essential for imperial rule, yet endless in monastic confinement was detrimental to political, economic and social stability as Russia's footprint in Asia grew in the eighteenth century.

Raskolnitsa Evdokiia Pavlova

Evdokiia Pavlova (no relation to Anna) was accused of adherence to the Schism. The Siberian District Office the Tobol'sk Ecclesiastical Court received a report on 6 October 1742

about her, and ordered her to be held at the Tiumen Military Governor's Office. Soon after, she was handed over to the abbot of the Uspenskii Monastery for confinement, with a sentence of hard labor and a diet of bread and water until she decided to return to the official Orthodox faith. When Evdokiia arrived at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent on 17 October 1742, the nuns had orders to supervise her imprisonment, ensuring she could not escape or receive other food. In addition, they were to admonish her for her "schismatic ignorance," and confirm when she returned to official Orthodoxy.⁴⁴⁶ Although Evdokiia Pavlova had arrived at the convent on 17 October 1742, the written confirmation of her custody was only sent at the end of January 1743. She was transported in a matter of eleven days from Tiumen to Dalmatov, but the official correspondence took over three months, possibly extending her sentence through bureaucratic means. In reports dated 15 February and 19 August of 1743, the head nun Tarsilla and the sisters of the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent declared that Evdokiia continued to behave badly during the singing of the hymns; she obstinately sat in church (standing being required for all able-bodied attendees), and she did not respond to rebukes.⁴⁴⁷ The Abbot Silvestr immediate reported all of this to the Tobol'sk metropolitan, but no further mention of her confinement, disobedience or punishment remains in the archival record.

Five defrocked nuns

In 1734, the Holy Synod sent five defrocked nuns to the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent. The elderly nun Anna, and the nuns Katerina Larionova, Ovdot'ia Mikhailova, Oksin'ia

⁴⁴⁶ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, *Perepiska s Tobol'skoi arkhieieiskoi kantseliariei o zhenshchinakh kolodnikakh*, 1745, l. 1.

⁴⁴⁷ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 3.

Yakovleva, and Okulinna Ivanova were "...committed to hard labor for the rest of their lives for heretical assemblage and impious deeds."⁴⁴⁸ After some eight years of imprisonment, they were eventually released in 1742, but not without incident. On 7 May 1742, the abbot of the Znamenskii Monastery and two archpriests from the Sofiia-Uspenskii Cathedral and the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Tobol'sk wrote to Abbot Silvestr at Dalmatov, complaining that head nun Tarsilla at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent continued to hold the five nuns in custody, in violation of an order from Empress Elizabeth and instructions from the metropolitan of Tobol'sk:

...Previously on 27 March 1741, orders sent from the Eparchial Office confirmed their [the nuns'] belief in the pious holy Greco-Russian Church by public confession and [they] acknowledged all their [previous] schismatic heresy and that they had accepted false knowledge. By order of the holy church, the damned are to glorify God and go and pray and before their spiritual fathers take the sacrament of confession while still having their legs chained. These unfrocked nuns are in chains because Abbess Tarsilla says they are dangerous, although she was ordered to remove them.⁴⁴⁹

The Tobol'sk churchmen told Abbot Silvestr that the metropolitan acknowledged the reports of Abbess Tarsilla when he received them on 10 February, but over a year ago he gave written instruction that the defrocked nuns were to be set free of their chains and returned to their monastic status immediately. In a letter on 28 August 1742, Nektarii and Kornilii, two monk-priests from Abbot Silvestr's own monastery in Dalmatov, also urged the release of the five

⁴⁴⁸ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 12.

⁴⁴⁹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 11.

nuns. They testified that they had heard the nuns' confessions, administered the Eucharist, and confirmed that they no longer held their schismatic beliefs.⁴⁵⁰ Finally, on 25 September 1742, over a year after the nuns acknowledged their heresy and returning to the official Russian church,, Abbot Silvestr told to the Tobol'sk metropolitan that the five women had been released and they had returned to their monastic status.⁴⁵¹

The long delay in their release may have been related to finding places for the rehabilitated nuns in other monasteries. Abbess Tarsilla probably had every right to fear for her safety and that of the other nun-jailors who had overseen their imprisonment and enforced the sentence of hard labor over the previous eight years. No further record of the five nuns exists, but on the heels of their release, the Dalmatov Vvedenski Convent received an order from the Tobol'sk metropolitan to release all "female monastics being held under guard for serious offenses after 1734 and 1735."⁴⁵² The reason given was due to Abbot Silvestr's inability to follow orders issued by the empress and the Tobol'sk Eparchy concerning the five imprisoned nuns. The metropolitan was unable to enforce hierarchical standards and limit irregular conduct at the remote monastery and convent at Dalmatov.

Runaway Wife Agafia Mikhailova

Agafia Mikhailova fled her husband, and for this offense, she was sentenced to two years penance at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent. But she escaped that convent, and was found

⁴⁵⁰ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 12.

⁴⁵¹ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 13.

⁴⁵² GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 245, l. 14.

living on the grounds of the neighboring men's monastery some months later. She did not receive an additional penance for this offense.⁴⁵³

CONCLUSIONS

As subordinates to the Tobol'sk metropolitan, Abbess Tarsilla and Abbot Silvestr were charged with enforcing discipline on their prisoners. Ironically, they did not act in compliance with orders and submitted to the correction of their superiors in Tobol'sk themselves while they were empowered to impose submission on others. They opted for their own local authority over that of the Church and state, and consequently found themselves in a uniquely powerful position of fulfilling an obligatory, but ominous task of empire – the control and surveillance of undesirable individuals and rebellious social forces. They engaged in what we might term imperial micro-aggression-- in other words testing the boundaries of acceptable conduct between ecclesiastical bodies and political hierarchies across the geographical space of the center, periphery, and the fringes of the periphery. Their methods of handling the imprisonment and confinement of women prisoners reveal the parameters of their autonomy, precisely because the stakes were relatively low. If women, let alone common women, were not freed in a timely manner or released at all, who would know? Who would care? Only when powerful imperial officials became involved, as they did in the case of Solov'eva, did monastic jailors act expeditiously. The judges, prelates, and politicians who issued the orders and who cared whether they were carried out were men; they controlled the institutions of power and claimed to possess the necessary knowledge. The female jailors, the abbess and the nuns surrounding her, were rare examples of women who actually shared a small measure of that power and knowledge

⁴⁵³ GAKO (SH), f. 224, op. 1, d. 304, *Delo o sodержanii kolodnitsy Prokla (kniania Paraskov'i Iusupovoi)*, 1746, l. 7-11.

that was otherwise the preserve of men (or, nominally, the empress). In an odd twist, it was the imprisonment of women in monastic spaces that actually provided other women, the context to act as agents of imperial power. The female jailors were bound by other responsibilities, and ultimately, they had to prioritize their own self-preservation. Yet, their authority to protect, scrutinize, and correct their prisoners expanded this realm of their activity from the spiritual, informal, and domestic economy of the convent to the sphere of empire. Acting as agents of empire expanded their reach into the social and political dominion of men.

In all these cases of elite criminals the Ministry of Secret Affairs found Iusupova, Pavlova and Solov'eva guilty of serious offenses and sentenced them to spend the rest of their days in Siberia as monastic prisoners. But why did these elite women suffer harsh punishment and distant exile for aberrant behavior or political duplicity committed by male members of their family? None of them had husbands; Pavlova and Solov'eva were widowed, and Iusupova and the Dolgorukii women were unmarried. But their marital status does not sufficiently explain why these women served as surrogates for political and moral failings of their male kinfolk. Russian women had both public and private roles, but their crimes fell into the political sphere, consisting of opposition to the ruling sovereign or the officially-mandated version of Orthodoxy. In the reasoning of some foreign observers, the involvement of these women in provincial or court life and in political affairs of their households left them tainted, and open to legal and moral retribution for encroachment into the masculine world. But did their own society view the crimes of these elite women in the same way? Were women legally or morally responsible for the behavior of men within close familial ties or intimate relationships? The noble and gentry classes had responsibilities – obligations to the sovereign, the maintenance of their estates, and military and civil service--and they could not spare the attention to keep their own in check. Elite

women were perhaps more expendable, and they could carry the burden of their menfolk's mistakes. However, their wealth, education and refinement positioned them within their own ranks, yet outside their own class they were virtually nonessential. This may partially explain the three cases in which the women were punished in place of their male relatives. The discrepancy in the sentencing of elite and common women also indicates that (widowed or unmarried) elite women were expendable, as they could be sent to distant Siberia, never to be heard of again, while women from peasant, merchant, and monastic communities were essential to the ordered functioning of daily life in the frontier spaces of Siberia. Thus, the common women held at the Dalmatov Vvedenskii Convent served relatively short sentences, and they were subsequently returned to their sacred or secular communities. Perhaps the elite women from the capitals could embody the "civilizing mission" so often attributed to women on the frontiers of empire, but paradoxically, their European sophistication was less than useless in their monastic prisons in Siberia.

Women on the Siberian frontier present very different picture of female behavior and gender performance than the literature on gender and empire would lead us to expect. Instead of posing as exemplars of moral rectitude and dependence on men, we find Russian women across class and geographic boundaries who rarely served as moral superiors and who were decidedly independent actors on their own behalf, and on the behalf of their families. The absolute irony of the nineteenth-century pious account of Iusupova's death should not be lost on our recollection of her life as a monastic prisoner. Her aura of asceticism and suffering was imposed on her by others, rather than a sign of her own pious devotion. Yet the defiant Iusupova might appreciate the irony that near her putative grave at Dalmatov a new generation of monastic women were praised for taking vows and 'revolting from the world'. The extraordinary interest of historians,

artists, and novelists in Iusupova that has continued for over three centuries after her death also speaks to the lasting intrigue of her storied life.⁴⁵⁴ However, Iusupova's actual experience at the Siberian convent has not been part of that narrative.

The cases of the monastic imprisonment of Iusupova, Pavlova, Solov'eva, and the Dolgorukii's should not serve as cautionary tales of aberrant female behavior, or examples of arbitrary rule and despotic oppression during an unenlightened period in Russian history. Rather they illustrate how these women experienced transitional moral and legal expectations, and thereby provide us with another view of elite women in eighteenth-century Russia.

The cases of monastic imprisonment in the mid to late eighteenth century unexpectedly reveal an inverted social structure, grounded in pragmatism, shared identities, and a disregard for traditional social hierarchy in spaces distant from the Russian heartland. Ultimately these cases reveal that monastic prisons were used as a political resource and an important maker of collective identity. The relationship between the state and female monastics in Siberia at first glance appears as an unequal distribution of power, yet their bond was tacit and reciprocal when gender and imperial identity converged within the intimate spaces of a prison. Primarily concerned with power, the Orthodox Church and Russian state leveraged the authority and effectiveness of women on the Siberian frontier to reinforce their own tenuous hold on power, while religious and laywomen gained authority by acting as imperial agents in imperial spaces.

⁴⁵⁴ Polovtsov, *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, 345; D. L. Mordovtsev, *Russkie zhenshchiny novogo vremeni. Biograficheskie ocherki iz russkoi istorii. Zhenshchiny pervoi poloviny XVIII veka*, (St. Petersburg: Tip. O. I. Bakst, 1874), 299-319; Valentin Pikul', *Slovo i delo: roman-khronika vremen Anny Ioannovny. Kniga 1 i 2*, (Moscow: Veche, 2015). Written sometime between 1961-71, and originally published in 1974-75; N. V. Nevrev, *1735. Princess Praskov'ia Grigor'evna Iusupova before taking the veil*, (Moscow: Tret'iakov Gallery, 1886).

Monastic imprisonment complicates our understanding of imperial interaction and the realities elite women in eighteenth-century Russia in faced on the Asian frontiers of Siberia.

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSIONS – WOMEN, ORTHODOXY AND EMPIRE

Women of Siberia

When asking what do we learn about the Siberian frontier in telling the stories of women, the answer converges with a picture of the inner function of empire, and the messiness of imperial expansion. Not only were women's experiences on the Siberian frontier different than men's, but also their experiences tell us more about Siberian frontier life. Russia was not only a multinational and multiconfessional empire, but it was also a gendered empire where women performed essential roles as imperial subjects and as agents in an expanding empire. Rather than being relegated to passive, marginal roles women directly and indirectly acted as agents that expanded an imperial presence in Siberia. Alongside men, women were complicit in the subjugation of native peoples. Women held and controlled land in their own names, mirroring conditions in European Russia, but based on the expedient needs of local authorities and officials at the center, women were also granted a degree of mobility, which disrupted the church and state's agenda to establish sedentary populations on the frontier. The vastness of Siberia and the small number of agricultural zones complicated the fulfilling imperial aims of transforming the region—or at least a significant part of it—into an extension of European Russian farmland. The needs of security and settlement of the frontier converged to create a mobile population of women whose lack of attachment to men left them suspect to charges of prostitution, and the corruption of Orthodox communities. Women were valued for many reasons—as an economic resource, as sources of economic stability, as transmitters of culture, and not merely as producers of children.

Although women were valued as a key component to establishing the frontier, their performance and behavior were often scrutinized by wider society. Entry into monastic life for

women in Siberia was a logical and prudent choice, but in many cases, it was influenced by socio-economic circumstances beyond their control. The heavy burden of taxes on monastic and state peasants, as well as military conscription that drew from 10 to 15 percent of the male population away from the peasantry left married women freedom of movement, while unmarried women had fewer prospects for marriage. If they did not marry or take monastic vows, negative perception of aging unmarried women and soldiers' wives often resulted in charges of illicit sex.

In the complex and contradictory frontier conditions women were empowered as standard bearers of Russian religious and political culture, and yet vulnerable domestic violence and external threats from raiding nomads, and predatory economic practices of both the church and state. At home they faced the prospect of violence, which had the potential to increase or decrease during the absence of male family members. The records show that when unmarried women or women with absent husbands made charges of rape, molestation, and incest, this exposed population was suspected of fornication and prostitution. Yet, both men and women were treated as full juridical subjects before the law, where testimonies could be given on their own behalf and on the behalf of others, but at the same time were punished for their own behavior or defiance. Women of elite classes who appeared on the frontier were deemed superfluous and punished for actions of male family members. While they were formally judged too politically dangerous and disruptive to society in European Russia, when imprisoned in Siberian convents were able to influence the monastic life of women, and disquieted ecclesiastical officials in Tobol'sk and Moscow. Simultaneously, women from middle to lower social ranks, that is, wives of military governors, merchant wives and abbesses were able to wield a significant amount of personal and communal authority in the frontier spaces of Siberia.

Women who consented or were coerced to leave their native communities and become Orthodox influenced the spread of empire beyond individual family life by providing links between ethnically mixed communities whose offspring were regarded as more reliable and legitimate imperial subjects. When fur trading men travelled further east to spaces in Russian Alaska in the late eighteenth century, they continued the practice of hostage taking of native women and children to extract fur tribute. In this way, they perpetuated the kind of sexual and economic exploitation of new groups of indigenous peoples that perhaps their mothers or grandmothers had experienced earlier on the Siberian frontier. The cyclical nature of absorbed and later propagated unequal relationships was embedded in frontier society within the hierarchical structures dictated by ecclesiastic and state authorities.

Monastic institutions underwrote these methods of acculturation while attempting to regulate to behavior of Orthodox women and the religious influence of indigenous peoples on its newly baptized followers. Monastic women on the Siberian frontier were not unidimensional or neutral actors in the religious and economic setting, but rather they were overt agents of empire. They reinforced ecclesiastical imperialism that began in the seventeenth century, and by the eighteenth century, they reinforced the larger political needs of the metropole, serving as jailors in monastic prisons. Continuously positioned as agents of social welfare, monastic women attended to the elderly and infirm, the penitent and the prisoner, within the confined spaces of convents that were paradoxically positioned on the open and vast spaces of the Siberian frontier. The monastic women who lived within the walls of the convents were similarly restricted by religious vows that offered economic security and social status as religious women, but prevented full integration within the communities where they lived and worked. Monasteries in numerous ways made up for the lack of security and social services the state failed to provide for

in nascent civil society on the frontier. Education, healthcare, and prisons all fell under the auspices of the church, and to fund and propagate its existence, the state granted land and peasant labor to support its financial needs. It was only in the nineteenth century that the state achieved sufficient presence in Siberia to no longer need church institutions as its proxies.

Ecclesiastical Imperialism & Implantation of Orthodoxy

The stories of Orthodox women in Siberia intersect with those of ecclesiastical institutions and the propagation of Orthodox belief on the frontier. The Russian Orthodox Church was not only the moral legitimizer of empire, but the driving force of imperial expansion in Siberia. The implantation of Orthodox in Siberia was a key feature of imperial expansion because frontier spaces were negotiated when military conquest was not feasible, and ecclesiastical cultural imperialism was the most viable means to establish stable relations with indigenous peoples. Orthodox marriage became one important vehicle for acculturating indigenous peoples to Russian ways, and stemming the acculturation of Russians to the ways of indigenous peoples. Interethnic alliances grew out of the church's desire for legal marriages that sought to curtail the practice of taking concubines, for stated reasons of morality; but ultimately sanctified marriages served broader aims of expansion in Siberia for the Russian State and Orthodox Church. Clergy conducting such marriages may have focused on the moral aspects of not living "in sin," but church and state officials were consciously aware of efficacy of acculturation based on centuries of interaction with multiethnic, and multiconfessional populations. Rather than moral enlighteners, the church aided in imperial expansion, leveraging ethnic difference and accepting practices of Tatar and animist origins, while upholding Orthodoxy as the imperial identity that linked all faithful and reliable subjects. Distinct from

other imperial settings the manner of Christianization, the Russian Orthodox Church lacked a narrative of racial difference that was present in the territorial expansion of other empires. Instead, Russian authorities relied upon centuries of institutional knowledge in dealing with the non-Russian and non-Orthodox peoples who populated the lands in Eastern Europe in which the Russian state had emerged. The experience in northern Russia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prepared Russians to deal with religious and ethnic differences while building a centralized state. The northern geographic routes into Siberia provided both transit points and conduits for the transmission of proven methods of ecclesiastical imperial practices. The settlement of the interiors of Siberia in the seventeenth century was a dynamic process that was based on continuity, but adjusted to local circumstances in which the church assumed an even greater role as the arbiter of empire.

Female Monastic Communities in 17th & 18th century Siberia

Women's monastic communities functioned as the only formal institutions for women in Russia, and were emulated and implanted in Siberia based on structures and tradition of European Russia. In the seventeenth century, they were formally envisioned as moral exemplars to the larger community. Most women's religious communities, originally loosely and informally structured in the early seventeenth century, were gradually reestablished as formal institutions and separate from those of men. The practical function of urban monasteries was to care for sick and elderly townspeople who financially supported them. Rural convents near steppe lands or agricultural zones established in the latter half of the seventeenth century relied upon monastic labor (including their own), and remained co-located with men's monasteries for primarily security reasons, but were to a large extent were financially self-sustaining. Both urban and rural convents relied upon the economic exchange of services and commodities, and they enjoyed the

support of community members along with extended ecclesiastic patronage networks. Both types of convents occupied new lands, extending the influence of the church in Siberia.

Female religious institutions were pragmatic, and they adapted to local circumstances to further their own economic survival while serving local and imperial needs. They not only served as symbols of Russian rule, but also performed economic and carceral functions. Even though eighteenth-century secularization policies of Peter I demanded both male and female monastic institutions limit their involvement in secular affairs, on the Siberian frontier monastic institutions continued to house political prisoners, and were positioned as organs for social control and surveillance that policed non-conformist groups. The effects of the 1764 monastic reforms, which closed monasteries and convents in all regions of Russia, appears to have had greater consequences in Siberia, where social welfare organizations and institutions were less developed and the Russian population was more reliant on Orthodox church institutions for education, care of the elderly and infirm, and to house dangerous criminals and political dissenters. In Siberia, the Russian population was already thin, and after 1764, fewer monastic personnel were available to meet these needs on the frontier. If Siberia was to serve as a “vast prison without a roof,” to transform dissenters and malcontents into bulwarks of the regime, it needed to supply them with the means to function.⁴⁵⁵ Frontier conditions that demanded the use of every means available, and others ended up assuming the roles once filled by monasteries and convents. Industrialists instead of archbishops, emerged as patrons of education and healthcare; prison campus replaced the penal settlements supervised by monasteries. This trend continued through most of the nineteenth century until the Great Migrations to Siberia, Central Asia and the

⁴⁵⁵ Beer, *The House of the Dead*, 15.

Far East in the 1870s and 1880s when monastic institutions again developed on the frontier and again became sources of social services for a growing migrant population.

Thus, the historic reliance upon the Russian Orthodox Church was not only symbolic, but the practice of leveraging ecclesiastical institutions as the vehicle for imperial expansion was foundational for success. Church domains were already safe and sanctioned public spaces to gather before the Siberian expansion, and women traditionally provided necessary services for liturgical functions as choir members, psalm readers, and bakers of communion bread. In frontier conditions, women performed their prescribed gendered roles, but their contributions to the settlement of the frontier also exceeded them. In the small unnoticed spaces of the home, village, convents and towns women mediated the settlement and growth of the frontier that must be considered for a more comprehensive understanding of Russian imperial practice.

Recent studies examine the Russian expansion and conquest of Siberia from activities of economic, political and religious subjugation and rule in Eastern Siberia and southern steppe lands, focus disproportionally on stories of extortion through hostage taking of native women and children and the military campaigns against indigenous populations, while ignoring the larger social and economic cost to Russian families relocated to the frontier. The cash-poor Russian state burdened with overpopulated lands in European Russia and eager for the extraction of natural resources from Siberia saw a solution to both problems in the resettlement of people. Yet the Russian state had so invested in tying its lower social orders to their localities and to service to the state and its servitors that it could not release them to make their own way to the peripheries. As a result, much of the Russian settlement of Siberia came from involuntary migration, and the population there remained insufficient achieve the state's aims.

The underpopulation of Siberia created a situation in which much labor was transient. The population of conscription age males (17 to 50) was often fluid and mobile, while the female population shows a mixed picture of comparatively sedentary groups within religious communities and established villages in agricultural zones, while wives of soldiers moved in and out of urban and rural communities in order to support themselves and their children. With 10 percent of the male population subject to military conscription after 1750, women provided numerous services to maintain communities economically and socially, and were a stabilizing force for settlement on a mobile frontier. Low population density of ethnic Russians coupled with military service obligations that relocated at least ten percent of the male population resulted in a dearth of men, not of women, in contrast to the usual picture in the secondary literature.

The desire for acceptable Orthodox wives was to a large part driven by the desires of men. Russian Orthodox authorities reproached practices men of living with women on the frontier outside the bonds of Orthodox marriage. The exchange and sale of wives and other women in Siberia did occur, but it served as a justification for the church to press the needs for social control in territories loosely held by the state and local officials. To retain a viable presence on the frontier, the Russian Orthodox Church required land and a peasant population to secure their economic interests. The conflicting needs of security and the establishment of communities were often at cross purposes, and in a complicated social situation, convents provided a stable location for women, and at the same time fulfilled the needs of the church to claim and hold land on a mobile transient frontier. Although the church initially positioned itself as the protector of women in frontier spaces, its own needs for income and growth demanded women's self-sufficiency on the frontier.

A Guiding Idea for the Study of Empire

What previous scholars have observed about the change and continuity of Orthodox spaces, popular religion, frontier governance, and securing and settling imperial borderlands of seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century Siberia can be confirmed, but also complicated through the stories of women and female monastic institutions on the frontier. Valerie Kivelson and Isolde Thyrêt unpacked how mapmakers and church hierarchs inscribed their conception of the sacred spaces of Siberia,⁴⁵⁶ but to fully realize to the power and duplicity of Orthodoxy on the frontier the stories of women also have to be part of the narrative. Christoph Witzenrath in his study of Cossack communities in Siberia pointed out that the meaning and authority of empire was never disputed, and its institutions provided a common point of reference or ‘guiding idea’, but “divergent interpretation of an institution were prevalent.”⁴⁵⁷ My study suggests that a comprehensive study not only takes into account how Cossack leaders interpreted their position on the Siberian frontier, but also how women interpreted the spaces they inhabited as widows, wives, and nuns, and unruly women. Michael Khodarkovsky and Valerii Puzanov provided the larger picture of frontier military conditions to show the competing nature of security and settlement Siberia and its bordering steppe lands,⁴⁵⁸ while Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter demonstrated the social impact of military on all members on society.⁴⁵⁹ A focus on women in

⁴⁵⁶ Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2006); Isolde Thyrêt, “The Esipov Chronicle and the Creation of the Concept of Siberia as a Special Sacred Space,” *Russian History*, no. 44 (2017): 594-607.

⁴⁵⁷ Christoph Witzenrath, *Cossacks and the Russian Empire, 1598-1725: Manipulation, Rebellion and Expansion into Siberia*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 14-15.

⁴⁵⁸ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); V. D. Puzanov, *Voennye factory russkoi kolonizatsii zapadnoi Sibiri: konets XVI- XVII v.*, Moscow: Aleteiia, 2010.

⁴⁵⁹ Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); “Soldiers’ Children, 1719-1856: A Study of Social Engineering in Imperial

these contexts reveals the contrasting roles of women who were both empowered and victimized by local and imperial demands for settlement and security.

Numerous other scholars in studies of empire building in Siberia have given only cursory mention of the role of the Russian Orthodox Church, the stories of women highlight how the church was fundamental to imperial expansion in Siberia. The church first positioned itself as the enforcer of morality in the establishment of Orthodoxy, and rhetorically argued its position as enlightener men and protectors of women in the wild spaces of Siberia. To correct and implant Orthodox practice the church needed monastic institution, land, and families that mirrored its operations in European Russia, and over two centuries the Russian Orthodox Church was the engine of empire in Siberia.

Nested within the practice of ecclesiastical imperialism is the story of women on the frontier, an account of the convergence of gender and empire that reinforces the notion that comprehensive the study of empire must include women and female institutions.

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